JANUARY
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Adventure

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ADVENTURE Jan. 18th, 1920

Published twice a month by The Ridgway Company at Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York City. Yearly subscription $3.00 in advance; single copy 20 cents. Entered as second-class matter Oct. 1, 1910, at the post-office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879

Vol. 24 No. 2 Serial No. 146

A Startling Memory Feat That You Can Do

How I learned the secret in one evening. It has helped me every day

WHEN my old friend Faulkner invited me to a dinner party at his house, I little thought it would be the direct means of getting me a one-hundred-and-fifty per cent. increase in salary. Yet it was, and here is the way it all came about.

Toward the close of the evening things began to drag a bit, as they often do at parties. Finally some one suggested the old idea of having everyone do a "stunt." Some sang, others forced weird sounds out of the piano, recited, told stories, and so on.

Then it came to Macdonald's turn. He was a quiet sort of chap, with an air about him that reminded one of the old saying that "still waters run deep." He said he had a simple "stunt" which he hoped we would like. He selected me to assist him. First he asked to be blindfolded securely to prove there was no trickery in it. Those present were to call out twenty-five numbers of three figures each, such as 161, 249, and so on. He asked me to write down the numbers as they were called.

This was done. Macdonald then astounded everyone by repeating the entire list of twenty-five numbers backwards and forwards. Then he asked people to request numbers by positions, such as the eighth number called, the fourth number, and so on. Instantly he repeated back the exact number in the position called. He did this with the entire list—over and over again, without making a single mistake.

Then Macdonald asked that a deck of cards be shuffled and called out to him in their order. This was done. Still blindfolded, he instantly named the cards in their order backwards and forwards. And then to further amaze us he gave us the number of any card counting from the top, or the card for any number.

You may well imagine our amazement at Macdonald's remarkable feat. You naturally expect to see a thing of this sort on the stage, and even then you look upon it as a trick. But to see it done by an everyday business man, in plain view of everyone, blindfolded and under conditions which make trickery impossible, is astonishing, to say the least.

* * * * * *

ON the way home that night I asked Macdonald how it was done. He said there was really nothing to it—simply a memory feat, the key to which anyone could easily learn in one evening. Then he told me that the reason most people have bad memories is because they leave memory development to chance. Anyone could do what he had done, and develop a good memory, he said, by following a few simple rules. And then he told me exactly how to do it. At the time I little thought that evening would prove to be one of the most eventful in my life, but such it proved to be.

What Macdonald told me I took to heart. In one evening I made remarkable strides toward improving my memory and it was but a question of days before I learned to do exactly what he had done. At first I amused myself with my new-found

ability by amazing people at parties. My "memory feat," as my friends called it, surely made a hit. Everyone was talking about it, and I was showered with invitations for all sorts of affairs. If anyone were to ask me how quickly to develop social popularity, I would tell him to learn my memory "feat"—but that is apart from what I want to tell you.

The most gratifying thing about the improvement of my memory was the remarkable way it helped me in business. Much to my surprise I discovered that my memory training had literally put a razor edge on my brain. My brain had become clearer, quicker, keener. I felt that I was fast acquiring that mental grasp and alertness I had so often admired in men who were spoken of as "wonders" and "geniuses."

"Our president complimented me on always being able to tell him instantly facts he wanted to know."

The next thing I noticed was a marked improvement in my conversational powers. Formerly my talk was halting and disconnected. I never could think of things to say until the conversation was over. And then, when it was too late, I would always think of apt and striking things I "might have said." But now I can think like a flash. When I am talking I never have to hesitate for the right word, the right expression or the right thing to say. It seems that all I have to do is to start to talk and instantly I find myself saying the very thing I want to say to make the greatest impression on people.

It wasn't long before my new-found ability to remember things and to say the right thing at the right time, attracted the attention of our president. He got in the habit of calling me in whenever he wanted facts about the business. As he expressed himself to me, "You can always tell me instantly what I want to know, while the other fellows annoy me by dodging out of the office and saying, 'I'll look it up.'"

* * * * * *

I FOUND that my ability to remember helped me wonderfully in dealing with other people, particularly in committee meetings. When a discussion opens up the man who can back up his statements quickly with a string of definite facts and figures usually dominates the others. Time and time again I have won people to my way of thinking simply because I could instantly recall facts and figures. While I'm proud of my triumphs in this respect, I often feel sorry for the ill-at-ease look of other men who cannot hold up their end in the argument because they cannot recall facts instantly. It seems as though I never forget anything. Every fact I now put in my mind is as clear and as easy to recall instantly as though it were written before me in plain black and white.

We all hear a lot about the importance of sound judgment. People who ought to know say that a man cannot begin to exercise sound judgment until he is forty to fifty years of age. But I have disproved all that. I have found that sound judgment is nothing more than the ability to weigh and judge facts in their relation to each other. Memory is the basis of sound judgment. I am only thirty-two, but many times I have been complimented on having the judgment of a man of forty-five. I take no personal credit for this—it is all due to the way I trained my memory.

* * * * * *

THESE are only a few of the hundreds of ways I have profited by my trained memory. No longer do I suffer the humiliation of meeting men I know and not being able to recall their names. The moment I see a man his name flashes to my mind, together with a string of facts about him. I always liked to read, but usually forgot most of it. Now I find it easy to recall what I have read. Another surprising thing is that I can now master a subject in considerably less time than before. Price lists, market quotations, data of all kinds, I can recall in detail almost at will. I rarely make a mistake.

My vocabulary, too, has increased wonderfully. Whenever I see a striking word or expression, I memorise it and use it in my dictation or conversation. This has put a remarkable sparkle and pulling power into my conversation and business letters. And the remarkable part of it all is that I can now do my day's work quicker and with much less effort, simply because my mind works like a flash and I do not have to keep stopping to look things up.

All this is extremely satisfying to me, of course. But the best part of it all is that since my memory powers first attracted the attention of our president, my salary has steadily been increased. Today it is many times greater than it was the day Macdonald got me interested in improving my memory.

* * * * * * *

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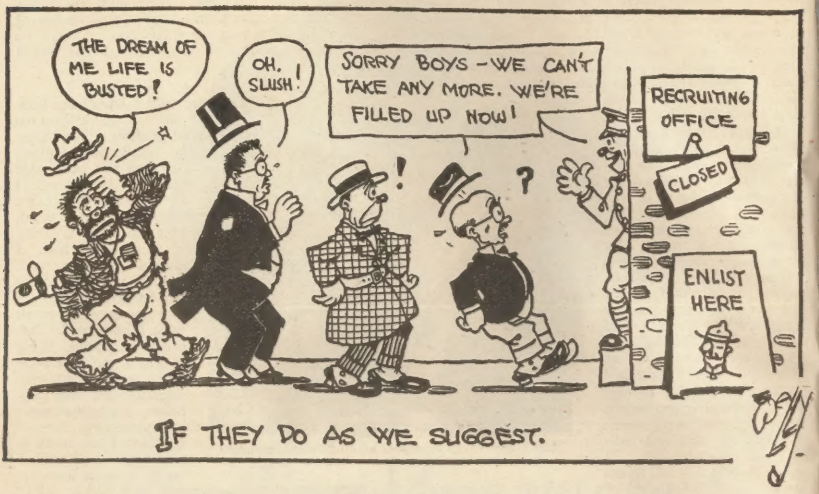
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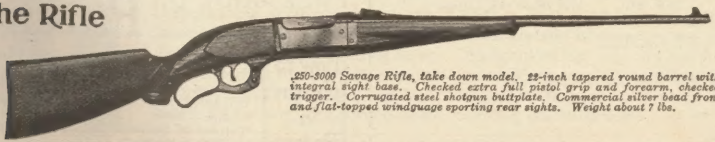
The Rifle



.250-3000 Savage Rifle, take down model. 22-inch tapered round barrel with integral sight base. Checked extra full pistol grip and forearm, checked trigger. Corrugated steel shotgun buttplate. Commercial silver bead front and flat-topped windguage sporting rear sights. Weight about 7 lbs.

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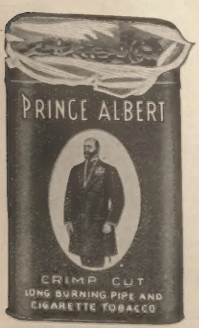

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DAN WHEELER, manhandler, gambler, lover of fair play! The name means much to old *Adventure* readers. Young Dan invades Chicago in the "wide open" days and there meets "*Smiling Snead*," terror of the tenderloin. "The Swinging Mirrors," a complete novelette by John I. Cochrane, appearing in our next issue.

ON A Summer afternoon of the year 1867, "*Uncle Dick*" *Wooton*, acknowledged to be second only to "*Kit*" *Carson*, as a mountain-man, is dreaming before his home in the Rockies of the days and men that are slowly passing before the steel fingers reaching farther and farther across the continent. Before the sun has set, however, he comes to a startling realization of the fact that even yet there is fighting to be done. "The Gate Through the Mountain," A Four-Part Story by Hugh Pendexter, beginning in the next *Adventure*.

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No. 2

Adventure

JANUARY 18, 1920

In Aleppo Bazaar

A Complete Novel by Talbot Mundy

An Up-and-Down-the-Earth Tale

Author of "The Shriek of Dûm," "Barabbas Island," etc.

THIS is the ninth of a series of tales in which the *Earl of Montdidier* and his three friends, one of whom is an American, strive by any honorable means to acquire enough money for the rehabilitation of the Montdidier estates that are impoverished because so many generations of Montdidiers have served their country in the wars.

Hitherto they have run foul of Portuguese colonial venality, of German misrule and avarice, of criminal cowardice on the high seas by German mariners, of savagery, hunger, dirt, disease. Success has not invariably dogged their footsteps, but their pluck and good humor have been unfailing.

The present story finds them yet a long way from the "million or two" that *Monty* needs, although by no means "broke;" and Aleppo Bazaar, by all odds the most wonderful place in all the Near East, affords them opportunity for Hope, Faith and, if not Charity, then something so subtly like it that the reader may well hesitate before he professes to detect the difference.

"ONE o' these days there's going to be a —— of a war!—oh, a whale of a war!—a war to make all the others put together look like a fish-wife argument!"

A bull voice, bellowing above the hum of Bill's upper room in Alexandria, exulted in the glory of the awful wrath to come without disturbing anybody's peace; for Bill's has this peculiarity, that although down-stairs in the long bar with its three subdivisions you may say what you please at your own risk exactly as anywhere else, up-stairs, where the initiate sit, entire tolerance is the rule, and nothing whatever that you say or think or do is held against you provided it does not impinge on the like privilege of others.

That is why the dingy place, with its narrow stairs and cheap plush furniture, is visited by such strangely assorted folk as bishops, sea-captains, camel-traders, Greek smugglers and Senussi pirates, to mention only a few of them. The right to play chess there at all hours of day or night was what first brought the soberer of earth's adventurers; something or other in the atmosphere that made the owners of deep scars—mental and physical—talk at random kept listeners coming. And out of that grew a democratic spirit that is loathsome to the loathly ones who strive always so bitterly to impose their vices on the world; that spirit strains the visiting list as through a fine-meshed sieve, without need of other Cerberus or censorship.

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Drunkenness, for instance, is permitted in Bill's upper room out of charity, but not insisted on. Get drunk down-stairs, and they throw you in the street for the police to deal with for the sensualist you are; up-stairs they will lay you under a table and put feet on you and, by way of being one's brother's keeper, not a man will say a word about the matter afterward. So drunkenness up-stairs is very rare.

Fred Oakes was far from drunk, although the songs he was singing and the raucous braying of his concertina might have misled the casual onlooker. Monty was, as always, stone-cold sober, playing chess, as it happened, with the chief engineer of a Cardiff collier, who would have been beside himself with nervousness had he known he sat *vis-à-vis* to an earl.

Will Yerkes was sitting telling tales of a New England village to a Jesuit priest from Ooticamund on his way to a Soudan flea-and-fly patch where he said he expected to remain until he died. I sat near them until the roar of other voices made Will's difficult to catch, and then crossed the room to the table where the man with the bull-frog throat was holding forth to fifteen nationalities. Not one of them was English, but they talked English because that is the tongue the ages have decided shall wipe out the curse of Babel, interspersing it with oaths like the edge of a rusty file, compounded of all the spite of the Levant.

He who roared had British blood in him. Not by a host are all the Anglo-Saxons who leave home observers of even half the Commandments—the Seventh perhaps least of all. His mother might have been part Greek, and there was a dash of black, as well as Syrian, in his make-up. Although he used the language, he professed a hatred of England.

"When the big war comes," he bellowed, "then we shall know who is to be master!"

He had money or the evidences of it. His fat fingers were carefully manicured—a very rare circumstance in the Levant unless the owner of them was raised in luxury. Two huge gold rings rather gave the lie to soft schooling, however; that on his right hand was set with an enormous emerald, that on his left with a ruby, and the combination produced a suggestion of ships, sailors and the sea that there was no escaping. Nor could he have picked up his phraseology—the educated slang, the tarry oaths and Western metaphor—without traveling in places where luxury, such as the East aspires to, is reckoned contemptible because impractical, or else a deadly sin. He sipped imported French champagne with the air of an epicure and ate sliced, raw German sausage with a noise like an ill-packed plunger-pump. A black-haired, thick-necked, low-collared, puppy-eyed, stocky, heavy mixture of a man.

He seemed to take delight in prophesying evil for the English. My nationality was written all over me—skin, clothes, attitude, angles—and he took advantage of the law of tolerance governing that upper room to direct the full force of his own intolerant spleen at me, knowing that nobody would support me in case I should object.

"Those cursed English own the sea-lanes because the world was asleep and let them take. They're a rotten lot of pirates, that's all! Gibraltar—Egypt—Aden—India—think of the plunder going to England every week in ships stuffed full to the hatches that 'ud have to sneak round the Cape o' Good Hope if it weren't for those well-chosen forts along their course. Well, that isn't going to last long!"

He sipped at his champagne half a dozen times, as if sampling the flavor of a fine revenge, while his audience cracked jokes that would pass muster in Fenian circles—tolerant of everything except England's friendliness.

"Not long, by the blood of a dog, not long! Any one who knows Aleppo could know that. There's going to be a railway station at Aleppo—a junction. Lines running north, south, east and west. A railway all the way from Europe into Persia and Afghanistan! Where will the English right of way be then? Tell me that! Who'll hold the shortest road to India when that time comes? Eh? And it's not far off, gentlemen; I myself have seen the men with instruments who mark off the place where the station shall be when the time comes."

That last sentence placed him at any rate. Anything can come out of Aleppo—even such an incongruous wealthy one as he. If he had seen what he said it was likely he had lived there; and since he was

so vehement it was possible his own pocket might feel the heaping values when land in Aleppo should be bought up for railway purposes, for thus self-interest doth make apostles of us all. You couldn't affect to love England and boom the Bagdad Railway at the same time—not in those days.

HIS talk soon grew boresome and I went over to watch Monty at his chess. Later Monty and I went out together to get mail—the exiled Anglo-Saxon's endless pilgrimage. On our return I was annoyed to see Will Yerkes sitting in very close conference with the owner of the bull voice. A whisper was beneath the compass of the Levantine, but he could lower his voice to a point where its rumble swallowed up the words and only the nearest man could understand. The whole room was aware they were discussing something, but the subject was obscure and Will's answers quite inaudible.

"I'll bet you that brute has discovered Will is American," said I, "and that he thinks the War of 1812 is still rankling in Will's bosom. He's proposing to twist the old lion's tail."

"Let's go and see whether you're right," said Monty and we crossed the room and sat beside them, to the Levantine's immediate and unconcealed disgust.

"This man has introduced himself to me by the name of Achmed McNamara," said Will. "The name sounds fishy but the business listens good."

The Levantine had sharper ears than Will imagined.

"Fishy?" he demanded. "My name is fishy? What do you mean?"

"Haven't you heard the saying that every time you eat fish you bite into a Scotchman?" Will answered.

Achmed McNamara laughed like a storm among loose doors and shutters, although he did not see the point. Nobody minds being called Scotch, or Irish, or Welsh, or Cornish, or even British. The English get the blame for others' virtues. Scotch, Welsh, Irish are excused for England's sins; and if you don't believe that try it.

"My grandfather was a Scotch general in the British army that fought in the Crimea," said Achmed McNamara proudly.

"D'you suppose he means general servant?" wondered Monty behind his hand and again the Levantine's sharp ears caught what was not intended for them.

"I had an English valet once," he said with a fat sneer. "I dismissed the man for pilfering."

At that moment he saw Fred Oakes making his way through the crowded room toward us. He spat at sight of him, and eased his stomach cautiously out from between the bench and table.

"I am not particular," he said. "I can stand almost anything. But not that man!"

Most people smile on Fred and his concertina, and make room for him with shouts of welcome. Runaways at sight of him are rare.

"What have you done to the fat rascal, Fred?" I asked.

"Merely made a song about him—nothing very libelous. Achmed McNamara is too tempting—rhymes with Sahara—goes with a deuce of a lilt—couldn't overlook it. I don't think he liked the verse about his ancestor who made love to the dusky damsel of the Soudan oasis. Never mind him; let's talk about food."

"Wait!" insisted Will. "Achmed McNamara has a scheme, and if you ginks hadn't interrupted I'd have the whole of it down pat by now. He's a crook all right, but that doesn't mean necessarily that this particular bit of business hasn't meat in it."

"I wouldn't be found dead in partnership with that brute!" I said.

Monty looked at me sharply and raised his eyebrows.

"Neither would any of us. Do you say that sort of thing when you're hungry, or thirsty, or what? Go on, Will."

"He's nutty about the Bagdad Railway. He says it's going to put Aleppo on the map in two-inch letters."

"So it will," said Monty. "Aleppo will be as big as London some day."

"He says property is already being bought up along the line the railway 'll have to take, but there's one piece lying right across the route, almost in the middle of the city, that the speculators can't get. He says that, counting what the railway people can be made to pay for their piece in the middle of it, and the natural increase in value of the remainder, there's a profit of about a million pounds to be made by any one who can get title."

"That 'ud be half a million for you,

'Didums'!" Fred could never see any proposition except from the viewpoint of Monty's needs. Left to himself Monty might have shrugged his splendid shoulders free of the burden of his mortgaged estates and have enjoyed life simply. But Fred, who would have died of ennui at Montdidier Towers and would have given Monty no peace until he had dragged him away on new travels, would never let his friend lose sight of the altruistic goal. "Half a million 'ud build new barns for all the tenants as well as make roads and fences and care for a mortgage or two!"

WILL slapped the palm of his hand on the table.

"Listen!" he said. "Achmed McNamara didn't know you and I are acquainted. He saw me talking to the U. S. consul and found out from him that my credentials are O.K. On the strength of that he came across with a proposal which you interrupted before he reached rock. Roughly it's a plan to get that strip of real estate and sell it for all it'll fetch. He says it's no earthly use his going after it because he's known. All the other men who know its potential value are stalling along in hope of buying cheap; some of them are trying to get together on a syndicate to bear the market and then buy the strip between 'em. Achmed McNamara proposes to snap while the snapping's good and get rich quick."

"Doesn't the present owner know the value of the piece?" asked Monty.

"The present owner is a woman!"

"And we're to go and plunder the lady!" Fred grinned genially. "Achmed McNamara, I misjudged you. I shall have to change the song!"

"Hurry up and tell us, Will," Monty urged. It was obvious he would not waste time and breath just before dinner on any such proposal as that.

"Achmed McNamara had the gall to suggest to me that I, being young and handsome, as he kindly put it, and of whole white ancestry, as he observed, should go to Aleppo and make arrangements to marry the dame. She's of proud, mixed family and it seems her sort never marry beneath 'em. Always aiming to breed toward the white and away from Asia. Seems the property is in her name and would still be hers under Mohammedan law even should she marry, but he thinks a trifle like that shouldn't trouble a bright young man like me. Once a woman is married, he says, to get her signature to title deeds is easy."

"Where would Achmed McNamara find his little honorarium?" asked Fred. "And how much?"

"Fifty-fifty was his idea—me to give promissory notes, properly witnessed, in advance; he to work the introductions and hoodwink the Turkish governor, who has to be in on everything, murder included."

"If that's all let's go to dinner," said Monty, "and if we pass Achmed McNamara on our way let's kick him where he hides his sentiments."

"It isn't all. The lady's name is Thabita—Syrian, I suppose for Tabitha. That's her given name; he hadn't come to the family name when you broke up the meeting. Thabita is all of a clue we've got."

"Clue to what?"

All three of us asked that question in one disgusted voice.

"To the lady's identity. But there ought to be only one strip of real estate to correspond with the story. We should be able to pick up the trail all right."

"What trail? Are you mad?"

"He tells me there are other marriageable scions in the market. In fact, the speculators are divided into two camps—those in favor of outright purchase—they have to be most cautious, he says, because the Turks 'ud swoop down and tax 'em into the poor-house if they suspected 'em of having money—and those in favor of acquiring title by marriage. The marriage boosters, he says, are all split up among themselves in favor of different candidates."

"What about the girl?"

"Not in love! Believes in female franchise—education—cigarets—and outdoor exercise. 'Just the wife for an American,' said Achmed McNamara."

"What's the point of all this?" demanded Monty. "You're surely not fool enough to be caught with a Syrian woman for bait?"

" 'In vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird,' " Will quoted.

"What d'you mean, Will?"

"Where they spread a net there's something doing——"

"Said the fish!" smiled Fred.

"I'm fond of bucking a crooked game myself as long as I know it's crooked. I'm for going to Aleppo."

"You're mad, Will!"

"America, I shall include you in the amended song of Achmed McNamara!" announced Fred contentedly.

"Why shouldn't we go? What are we doing here? I'm weary of this place. Types and tales don't interest me any longer worth a nickel. What's the matter with Aleppo anyway? Why don't you go and look at it? If there turns out to be nothing in this yarn, aren't we as likely to start another rabbit running there as here? Are we any worse off after we get there, barring the few dollars for transportation? My theory is that while the forty thieves are plotting to steal the estate from Thabita we all can come by it fair and square. Why not make an honest dollar when we get the chance? The last two ventures have turned out punk as far as profit was concerned."

"Will," said Monty, "I've lived most of my life in the East, old fellow. When I wasn't in the cavalry I was political resident in native Indian states, and when I wasn't that I was traveling. If I've learned one thing it's this: The surest and generally the swiftest route to deadly trouble is through the harem door. Let women alone!"

"Aw—quit preaching! When did you see me fooled by a woman?"

We all laughed loud at that. Will's respect for any kind of woman is a joke—at any rate east of Sable Island. That very morning he had thrashed a man in the street for insulting a woman through her window, quite regardless of the fact that ladies able to appreciate an insult are not visible through windows in Alexandria. The resultant row had led to the call on the United States consul and indirectly, therefore, to this very Aleppo madness, supposing it were really true that Achmed McNamara had decided to trust him on the consul's word.

"I'll bet Achmed McNamara is half-uncle on his mother's side to the second cousin of the man you thrashed this morning and they've cooked up a plan between them to fleece you to the bone for it. I'm off to dinner now," said Fred, "if I have to go alone. Aleppo, and Jemima of the real estate can await!"

WE ALL followed Fred down the dingy, narrow stairs and out into the clean night air that sweeps the Alexandria sea-front. The stars were out. Men dine at the Christian hour of eight or nine o'clock in those wise latitudes.

We strolled along the sea-front toward our hotel in the blissful condition of free men with appetites and money in the bank, oblivious of everything except whatever—stars, scenery, sea air, cigars—tended to subserve the mood.

Monty and Will walked arm-in-arm in mute disclaimer of the unbidden thought that either might have been offended by what the other said. It was I who first noticed we were followed.

"There's either a footpad, a beggar or a spy keeping pace with us twenty yards behind," I said.

"Piffle! What would a spy want?" Fred asked.

"Let's see," said Monty. "Wait for him."

So we faced about, and in a minute the man was at arm's length—very bulky-looking in the dim light—none other than Achmed McNamara.

"Good evening, gentlemen," he said, nervous, yet deadly determined to go through with it.

"What do you want?" asked Monty.

"From you nothing. From this man—" he pushed a fat forefinger out and touched Will—"a promise."

"You're getting sensibler," grinned Fred. "It was promissory notes an hour ago."

Achmed McNamara spat savagely and showed the beautiful, regular teeth between his coarse lips.

"From you I want silence!" he barked. "From you with your songs and your barbarous instrument I have had more than I mean to endure without reprisal. I have warned you. I shall get you. Unless you run away you shall pay through the snout for that song you made!"

"I always run away to save my snout from overtaxation!" Fred laughed. "It's habit. Go on—let us know what you want from my friend."

Achmed McNamara turned sideways so as to face Will squarely and pointed again with the fat forefinger.

"Your consul told me you were a gentleman. I hope that is true. I made you a proposal between gentlemen, not knowing at the time that you were connected

in any way with these other persons." What volumes of slander that meek word "persons" can imply on the lips of an accuser! "It happens, though, that what I said was only said to test you. The real proposal was to follow, after I had satisfied myself of your bona-fides. Consequently you know nothing at all about my affairs really—only a little that is vague and meaningless."

"I'm sure I feel overwhelmed with concern!" said Will.

"You said something about a promise," I put in. "Why the promise?"

He ignored me entirely. I was as dirt beneath his patent-leathered feet.

"However—as between gentlemen—I expect you to promise me to let the matter drop."

"What the devil do you mean?" demanded Will.

The flint of his voice struck fire on the steel of the Levantine's insolence.

"This—that you would better keep your silly fingers out of fire! I saw you talking to these persons. I know you were telling them what I told you. I warn you to let the whole thing alone. If you don't, you take the consequences!"

"Meaning just him, or all of us?" asked Monty.

The man detected the amusement underlying Monty's calm inquiry and flew into a rage.

"All —— four of you! Go to Aleppo if you dare! Forget you ever saw me—that is wisest. I will make the earth too hot to hold you if you interfere with me. You —— Englishmen! You swagger about the world and poke your noses into anybody's business. This time you poke into a hornet's nest! Get away! Keep away! Go to —— and mind your own affairs! It is a pity this American is in your company."

"That'll do for you!" said Will, and we all stood ready to prevent him in case he should mean violence. The Levantine could have hired a hundred police-court witnesses within an hour to swear to anything. But Will was more amused than angry.

"I'm going to kick you in the belly if you stand there, McNamara. And if you can't run faster than me I'm going to duck you in the nice salt water over yonder. Now then—at the word three! One! Two!——"

So we four hunted Achmed McNamara along the shore front at Alexandria, whooping like lunatics, and were out of breath as well as hungry when he ran like a hurried hippopotamus across the street, and we lost him at a corner, a minute or two away from our hotel.

"I tell you what, Will," said Monty, panting between bursts of laughter, "I'm beginning to believe there's something in this view-halloo of yours. That Levantine is a shade too anxious to throw us off the scent of something."

"I said let's go to Aleppo and look," said Will. "I say it again. What's the matter with going and looking?"

"I'm willing," said Monty. "How about you, Fred?"

"You're two utter idiots!" he answered. "Didums knows better, and Will ought to. But I've squeezed all the juice out of Alexandria. I'll go with you under protest."

"And you?"

"I'm outvoted already," said I, "but I'll make it unanimous."

"There's just one thing to make sure of first," said Monty. "Are we undertaking this because the Levantine said we shouldn't or because we think there's something in it?"

"You mean are we taking a dare? That greasy half-breed couldn't dare me into eating dinner! I chose to go and I go," said Will. "He can neither stop nor send me."

"Suppose we see how we feel about it in the morning," Monty suggested, but that was more than Fred's high spirits could endure.

"Didums, you croaker, you're getting old. My protest is withdrawn. I insist on seeing Will make love to the fair Jemima. He and I start for Aleppo on the first boat going that way if I have to wheel him on board in a barrow. Now then—dinner! Do you hear me? Dinner!"

So we went and tubbed ourselves, donned stiff-fronted shirts and ate eight courses in a gilded dining-room as earnestly as men who have never stepped a yard beyond the boundaries of London Town.

II

DINNER was good and the moon saw us after dinner on the roof, optimistic and smoking exquisite cigars. But daylight again brought Monty to his senses, if not the rest of us.

"Aleppo if you like," he said. "I've always wanted to explore Mesopotamia. All caravan routes end at Aleppo, but no monkeying with married or unmarried Syrian women!"

The rest of us, even including Will, were glad to have him to blame for vaccillation. In the calm, sweet light of the Mediterranean morning we did not view the prospect of speculation in Syrian real estate with quite the same gusto. To wander off into the Mesopotamian desert proffered no hope of swift financial success but smacked more of sanity for all that.

So Fred and Will went down to the hotel store-room to inspect our mounds of camping-kit and hunting-gear, while Monty and I strolled to the steamship offices to make the round and find when a ship would start. Besides the regular lines there are several small fleets of tramps that earn ingratitude in the Levant, and we were lucky enough to find one of a fleet of four, belonging to one owner, that was loading and would sail next day for Alexandretta—Aleppo's nearest port.

She had accommodation, labeled first class, pooped up high at the stern where the cabins could catch the smoke. The lone clerk in the office showed us a diagram, but we preferred to know the worst in advance and strolled down to the dock—followed rather closely, I observed, by a limping, wizened little cripple in brown rags, who, without perceptibly improving its condition, had been cleaning the office window when we arrived on the scene.

The cabins turned out to be less unsanitary and the galley and bathroom less unclean than anticipated, so we returned to the office—followed again by the cripple in brown rags. By that time, of course, we were quite sure that Achmed McNamara had employed him to look out for us and report. It did occur to me to wonder why McNamara's spy should have the right to wash steamship office windows and I said something to Monty about it, but he was busy examining change for worthless paper money and, by the time he had obliged the clerk to make good three suspicious bills, the other suspicion was clear out of our heads.

Being of the Alexandrian slums—which is to say, so utterly without shame as not to be aware of its existence—the spy begged of us as we emerged through the office door. I gave him a shilling and his astonishment was so unfeigned at the sight of all that money all his own that we again forgot suspicion, this time in laughter. At the time I thought he ran away anxious to get the money spent before he should wake up and discover it was not real. Within half an hour we knew he had run to warn Achmed McNamara, but the last thing we intended was to change our minds on the Levantine's account and it did not even enter our heads to book passage later on another ship.

Discovery that I had left a couple of novels behind in the steamship office was what brought enlightenment. I went back to get them. Achmed McNamara saw me first. He dodged round a corner but I recognized his back and it occurred to me to ask the clerk what he knew about him.

"He is part-owner of the line," he answered. "For some reason he has decided to return to Aleppo on the ship tomorrow."

So we were not surprized when we went on board and found the fat-lipped Levantine, with his port and starboard rings in place, in full enjoyment of the glory that goes with ownership. He and we were the only passengers, and, although the voyage was unlikely to be long, it was obvious from the first that either we should know one another vastly better by the end of it, or else turn what he called his "liner" into a "hell-ship." For he made a dead set at us from the start—refused to be snubbed—utterly ignored all cause for enmity, quite freely offered him, and turned the steward loose on cases of special canned food solely for our benefit.

There was only one table in the saloon, nor more than room for one. He sat at the head of it and kept meals waiting until we joined him. Then he had all the plates taken out and rewarmed, and no medical major domo at a fashionable cure ever cared for his patients' digestions more studiously than he for ours.

When sheer, downright snubbing failed to discourage him—and Monty on social stilts could make an iceberg seem like June sunshine—Fred Oakes sang the song again that had given such offense in Alexandria:

"Oh, Achmed McNamara, oh, tarara, oh, tarara,
Left his home in the Sahara for the far Sahara's good."

It was a wholly opprobrious song, intended to reach down among the victim's sensibilities and scarify them. Yet the victim laughed! The man who could do that was not going to be held at a distance with anything less than blows, and those delivered with a marlin-spike or some similar aid to emphasis.

"All the decencies disdaining, he was warned against remaining;
"It was no use his explaining that he wasn't understood."

Verse after verse, each less sparing than the last, swelled under the low saloon beams and let the ship's crew know of McNamara's alleged impious history. And finally McNamara himself suggested an incident or two that threw all Fred's imaginations into shade. There was simply no way of outraging him. Yet ashore the same man had flown into a tantrum at half as much.

"I wasn't understood. That's the key of it. You men don't understand me, gentlemen all. You don't know the East. You are trying to apply your Western rules of conduct to me, by Allah! You might as well try to measure a round ball with a straight yardstick!"

"You're mistaken," said Monty, "we're not interested in you in the least."

Achmed McNamara laughed at that rejoinder as if it had been a merry effort to amuse him. His great coarse guffaw made the dishes rattle.

"All right, gentlemen all," he answered, "that only adds proof of how East and West are different. I've East enough in me to know the ropes, and West enough to be interested in four fine men when I see them. Four fine men, I said. I've made inquiries since you hunted me along the esplanade. I know how much money you had in the bank at Alexandria. I know what your business is—prospectors, gold-miners, explorers. I know what you want more money for. I've friends on back-stairs who can report what Lord Montdidier says to other lords and ladies. I know all about you. What do you know about me?"

"We don't want to know about you!" Monty answered.

"There you are," said McNamara, "that is an instance of the West's indifference toward the East."

"Not at all," Monty answered, "it's simple dislike for a bounder!"

The man's amusement at that, if laughter meant anything at all, was titanic. He leaned back in his chair to let the buffalo mirth escape.

"You're going to like me," he gasped, "before you're finished." Then, as the steward left the saloon: "Liking has to have roots. You have to build on something. Can't build on air. Can't build on acquaintance scraped in a place like Bill's. Money's the stuff to build on! I'm going to put money your way, gentlemen all. Money talks!"

"If it talked as loud as you do," said Monty, "no self-respecting man would touch it!"

But there was no repressing him at all. And the dinner was good, although our host ate like an animal and the liquids sought to wander abroad because of the semicircular gyrations of the ship's stern. We did not care to leave before the end of it.

"You think that because I made a shady proposition to your American in Bill's that evening, that I'm not to be trusted. Now isn't that so?"

"Marvelous!" said Monty. "Your insight is simply marvelous!"

"Well, you don't know the East."

"As you keep saying."

"I use Eastern methods."

"Or any other, I should say, that suits your purpose!"

"I was simply finding out whether the American would take me up on a shady proposition."

"You found out," said Will. "If you need any more convincing just make me another, that's all!"

"Aha! Oho! Oo-uh-ho-ho! Not me! Not Achmed McNamara. I've found out to my complete satisfaction that you four men are true blue. I'd be willing to trust you with my money. I feel sure of you."

Will leaned back and blew smoke rings while we waited for the pudding course.

"You make me tired," he said, looking sideways at the man from under lowered eyelids. "You couldn't work a con game that way on the kindergarten grade where I come from. Get out your pea and shells; you'll find that easier."

"You think I want your money. I don't! I have more than all you four together!"

"Then what the deuce are you after?"

"I have discovered that you are not to be frightened easily. I tried to keep you away from Aleppo with threats. You were not to be intimidated. You are just the men I want for my honorable purpose. I can introduce you straight away into the heart of an Aleppo business into which you could not break otherwise with the aid of a thousand influential English friends."

PARTLY for sake of the amusement, for the man's persistence in itself was entertaining, partly because his dinner was good, but mainly because there was no preventing him, we sipped our coffee and let him roar out his confidences in what he thought a whisper. Once yet Monty interrupted him:

"You're talking nonsense. Aleppo has always been an English trading-ground. My bankers can supply me with the key to any decent commercial circles in Asia Minor. I don't need your interference."

But it was hopeless. Every argument against him seemed only to strengthen his case in his own eyes. He lolled back in his chair at the head of the table and laughed again until our ears were full of the abominable noise.

"Imagine me going to London to make a million pounds within a month on the strength of my banker's introduction! Oah-ha-ha-ha! Besides—if I could make two million pounds without sharing it with you, d'you suppose I'd as much as mention it? D'you take me for a fool?"

"No, for a bounder," said Monty.

"I'm too well known in Aleppo——"

"To the police?" suggested Fred.

"To everybody! The police of Aleppo, gentlemen all, are Turkish; that is sufficient description of them. What they do not actually steal they accept in the form of bribes. We have nothing to do with the police in this case, nor they with us. We have nothing to do with the Turkish governor, either, and that is the whole point. When I told this American that the property I am after is owned by a lady named Thabita, I made use of the simple truth, but not all of it. The lady in question is my sister."

That was certainly something of a bombshell to drop among four after-dinner dullards, and we suddenly took more interest—as he noticed with those fat, ox-eyes of his—although none of us could have given a reason why the sister of such a man should interest us more than the man himself. She was probably fat like himself and greasy, with a voice that would raise a roof. The same thought passed across Will's mind, for I saw him shudder.

"My sister is not single."

Our eyes met. Complications!

"She acquired the property by marriage."

"Why not say she's a widow and have done with it?" asked Fred.

"Because she is not a widow—not exactly."

"You suggested I should marry her, a night or two ago," Will reminded him.

"Ah! That is because you are American. You understand such matters. I am told the Mormons of America——"

It was Will's turn to laugh now and he did it with the high-pitched squeal the U. S. keeps in stock for the Old World's misinterpretations of the New.

"A small minority has seceded," he said. "At least one per cent. of the States now are non-Mormon, if you count the women and kids."

"Never mind!" said Achmed McNamara. "The point is that you will understand the situation readily and meet it with open mind. These others—these English—are too —— conventional; they will be shocked. It is to America that we must look for open-mindedness."

"Cut the compliments and spill the beans," said Will. "I want to go on deck."

"Then listen! My sister—she is my only sister, much younger than I—became the wife, and the only wife, observe, of a wealthy Armenian—a very wealthy Armenian. He owned all that land I speak of. He became a Mohammedan for the sake of safety, but it did not save him because he was so wealthy that when there was an Armenian massacre he was one of the first to be butchered in order that his property might be acquired. But recollect! My brother-in-law, the Armenian, had changed his religion and had become Mohammedan. There was no doubt of it. His wife had proof.

"That placed her, of course, under the protection of the Moslem law. That gave her the absolute right, as widow, to the deceased husband's property under the terms of the testament. The Turks will

do anything to a Christian, or to any non-Moslem, but they are careful of their own religionists to a certain extent. That is why I am a Mohammedan. I do not believe in being a Christian on Turkish territory. A man's religion is what he lives by, as we say in the East, and we should cut our coats accordingly.

"It happened that it was the governor of Aleppo who had his eye on my brother-in-law's estate. So when the widow claimed the protection of Moslem law and denounced the husband's cruel murderers as fratricides—slayers of one on whom they had conferred the strongest brotherhood there can be, that of religion—the governor of Aleppo was in something of a quandary. But he desired that property nevertheless.

"So what did he do but seize my sister, the widow of that rich Mohammedan Armenian, and put her in his own harem!"

"And so endeth this lesson," said Fred impiously. "Between us four and harems is a great gulf fixed!"

"It was very far from being ended! Excuse me, but it is I who am telling this story, not you!"

Achmed McNamara was very far from laughing now. His bull voice had taken on a sort of leather-mallet tone, such as the ultra-sensual keep to talk religion with and love.

"If he could have married my sister, then it would have been ended."

"Then why the devil didn't he? Can't a Turkish governor do as he pleases?"

"He already had four wives. The law allows him four only!"

"But what about concubines?"

"As many as he pleases."

"Well then?"

"He does not acquire control of the property of a concubine. With her death it would pass to her heirs, not to him. At my sister's death that property would pass to me. Therefore her life is safe in Aleppo, and mine is not. As long as I live my sister will not sign any paper altering the disposition of the property, even supposing that the religious court would recognize such a document. Therefore as long as I live that governor and his friends will seek to murder me!"

"Why did you tell me, then," demanded Will, "that there is a party in Aleppo in favor of acquiring that property by marriage, and that the party is all divided up in favor of different candidates?"

"I told the truth, but only part of it. There are two parties. One is representing German financiers; they would acquire the property from the governor by purchase. They propose to bribe him handsomely and leave the means of obtaining my sister's signature to the necessary title deeds to him.

"But the other party, which is very influential behind the scenes, objects to playing so simply into the hands of foreigners. They recommend marriage; they have at least a dozen candidates who are bidding against one another. The girl is young and beautiful. They would accept a very small share of the estate; then the syndicate could sell the rest of the estate outright to the Germans.

"That is all very simple, of course. But there enters in this complication. One of the governor's four legal wives is old and in ill-health! If she should die, then he could marry my sister, and there would be no need to share the plunder with any one. So he is pursuing dilatory tactics. They say that the doctor, whom he permits to attend his old wife at intervals, has lost some suspicious cases."

"WHY don't he use the bowstring?" demanded Will. "I've always heard that Turks throttle the wives they're tired of, sew 'em in a sack and drop 'em down a well, or in the Bosphorus or something."

"Ah, these stories about Turks! Some of them are true. Most of them no doubt are true—at one time or another. But for the governor of a province to murder his wife with such an obvious motive would be too outrageous altogether. He would simply submit himself to so much blackmail on that account that all the taxes of the province would never be enough to pay it. Why, there would be a stampede to Stamboul of eunuchs and hangers-on, all seeking to be first to lay the information where it would fetch the highest price. Some high court official would then proceed to turn the screws and the governor of Aleppo would become a very poor man—bit by bit. No, no! The thing is not so simple. Judges can be bribed in Turkey. So can everybody else. Massacres can be arranged at wholesale; there are so many

guilty ones in that event that the blame can not be brought home. But there are limits to what even the governor can do without paying a price for it."

"Well, what's your proposal?" Monty demanded.

"That you should help me rescue my sister."

"Gee!" from Will.

"The devil you say!" from Monty.

"First explain this," I said, "before we turn your offer down finally. How is it that you couldn't abuse England and the English violently enough the other day at Bill's, and yet you invite us now to undertake this delicate mission?"

"Ah!" he answered. "Who likes England? To do good business, deal with England; to be sure of your pay, deal with Englishmen; if you want to know the truth about a thing, then read the English papers; if you want a good time, value for your money, sport, fun, good food, toleration—go to London, England. But to —— with England! I deal with the English because they play straight, but I hate them! —— them! Everybody hates them! This man is American, which is a different matter.

"I invite you three because you are men of integrity and courage; him I invite because of his nationality. My sister desires above everything to go to America and live there. She has no use for the estate in Aleppo. She would be very well satisfied with a draft on New York for a million dollars as her share. We would divide the rest—you four and I. But the simplest, the safest, the easiest course would be, would it not, for this young American to marry her?"

"I'll hand it to you," laughed Will, "you're an optimist. You think I'm a Mormon because I hail from the States, and a Mormon's the same as a Turk in your judgement, eh? You guess I'd marry 'em fast as they come, if they'd money. But what if the lady wouldn't have me?"

"Not have you? Yuh-ho-ha-ha! She'd jump through a top window into your arms!"

"Some fairy!" Will murmured. "What does she weigh?"

"Ah! You laugh! You do not believe! Her late husband—my brother-in-law—the wealthy Armenian, took her with him more than once to the United States on business. She loves New York. She idolizes the Americans. As to her weight? You think that because I am heavy—Wait! Wait until I show you her photograph! Wait here!"

While he was gone we sat looking at one another in silence, smiling but saying nothing. None wanted to be first to admit that the fat-lipped mongrel had told at least a plausible story. None cared to scoff, lest some strange twist of fortune should eventually prove the weird tale true and the scoffer no wiser than all scoffers are. Even Fred Oakes, the irrepressible, to whom we all looked for a first opinion, averted his eyes and blew cigar-smoke rings up between the beams. Not one word had passed between us when the Levantine came back.

He unwrapped the photograph from half a dozen sheets of pink and tinsel paper, his fat fingers shaking with emotion.

"Judge for yourself!" he said, passing it to Will.

Will took it, judged and passed it on. It was the faded likeness done in New York of a girl not more than eighteen or nineteen, dark-haired as the Levantine himself, but slender, with an almost perfect figure and hands as unlike his pudgy paws as chalk is unlike cheese. She had the Armenian nose but the rest of her features would have passed for Western.

"She can't be your sister," said I.

"Oh, yes! She is my sister by my father's second wife. My mother was a Jewess from Greece, hers an Armenian from Tarsus."

"Well," said Monty, glancing in turn at the photograph and passing it back to its owner, "your story may be true and that may be your sister, but it doesn't interest me. We have no right, legal or moral, that I know of, to break into any Turk's harem and carry off a woman from it. If she were English or American the case might be different."

"It isn't even as if she had appealed to us herself," said I.

"Or even as if we liked our host," added Fred maliciously.

"If I were looking for a wife," said Will, "I'd have to be very drunk and destitute before I'd choose a widow, sight unseen."

"But, gentlemen all!" The Levantine threw back the heavy locks of oily hair from off his forehead with a gesture of almost magnificent appeal. "What if the lady herself should address her appeal direct to you? What then? I do not ask

you to believe me. I do not ask anything for my own sake——"

"Not a whopping big percentage of the loot, for instance, eh?" asked Will.

"Yes. I will take my share—my full share—that is true. But at that you know all about me. I have no other stipulations up my sleeve. A man is a fool who lets wealth slip past him. What is he, gentlemen all, when he refuses to rescue a lady in distress?"

We met eyes again and did not answer him. Florid—extravagant—absurd—nevertheless, his appeal had weight to it, and I for one would not have committed myself to a flat refusal—not until he should have a chance to prove his statements. He seemed able to read something of our change of mind—a legacy with which his eastern ancestors had blessed him.

"What if Thabita, my sister, should herself appeal to you direct? Would you then refuse her? Listen! There is not a man in all Aleppo to whom I can appeal. To the Greeks? To the Syrians? To the Armenians? To the Jews? To the Georgians? To the Turks? To the Arabs? To the Circassians? Any one of those would sell the information promptly for a very small sum to the governor! Then to the English? They would laugh at me! To the French? They would ask me whether the woman was not well provided for? To the Germans? They would take the matter up, no doubt, but in their own interest; it is likely they would cause me to be arrested. You do not know what goes on in Turkish prisons. Once in a Turkish prison—I am a big, strong man, gentlemen all; the bigger and stronger, the worse for me. I am not weak but I would sign anything if they once put the torture to me in a Turkish prison. Ugh! I have seen the bodies brought out for burial."

IF WE had had anything else to occupy our time with, except Monty's perennial chess-board—and that interested only him, not us—it is practically certain we should have dismissed the man's proposal without ceremony. It was not in its favor, for instance, that he frankly disliked three of us and that we were unanimous in our distaste for him. We did turn him down flat for the time being and went on deck to pace back and forth under the stars.

But time came to retire to the stuffy little cabins and then each of us had only four walls very close at hand instead of the illimitable sky. Sleep refused to come to me and, as I tossed on the hard bunk, imagination played strange tricks. Utmost efforts at concentration on twenty other problems in turn failed to banish from mind the picture of a widow in the hands of that scoundrelly Turk, pleading in vain through iron bars for ordinary human charity.

The creaking of the woodwork became the footfall of assassins or the whispering of schemers. The noise of an overworked pump somewhere down in the bilge transformed itself into a woman's sobs. When I did fall asleep at last, a Turk came in my dreams and explained in excellent English that I had no legal right whatever to interfere and that the woman would be dropped into the Bosphorus at dawn; yet all the while a voice there was no locating insisted that any gentleman would know what to do and would do it swiftly without reference to his own convenience.

At breakfast I found that the others' experience had been similar. We had all dreamed about the business in one form or another and, although we were the last men to be influenced in our decision by "such stuff as dreams are made of," we recognized the dreams as evidence that the Levantine's strange story had got down deeper into our thoughts than his personality had into our regard.

And then came bad weather, to keep us in the saloon with nothing to do but read uninteresting books, tell oft-repeated tales, play chess or cards and think. Thought brought back that story of the woman in the governor's harem and, although reflection on the subject set us more on guard than ever against Achmed McNamara's blandishments, curiosity increased.

"Can't you go with your story to the missionaries?" we asked him the third night at dinner.

"Missionaries!" He puffed out his cheeks and held his hands palms uppermost. "Everybody goes to them with tales. Most of them believe the lies and disbelieve the truth. But suppose they did believe me; what could they do? They can't interfere in a purely domestic issue between Mohammedans. I'm Mohammedan—so is my sister—so is the Turkish governor. And if you can point to a single infringement of

Turkish law or custom, even down to the kidnaping of my sister, that's more than anybody else can. Suppose you can prove she was kidnaped—what then? Shall the missionaries imitate the Turks and burst the governor's harem open?"

"Then how do you propose we should go about the rescue?" Monty asked him.

"Ah! Ask me another. You are offered the half of a property worth two million pounds; do you imagine you are offered that for nothing? That is the price of American ingenuity and English bulldoggedness to be applied to the problem. If I knew how to do it, I would do it. If I could put the million pounds I offer you into my own pocket, I would multiply my little fleet of liners until all the Mediterranean—and perhaps even other seas—should know my house-flag."

"Your house-flag is a yellow dog, isn't it?" Fred asked him blandly.

"No, sir! That animal is a golden fox."

The more his little liner pitched and wallowed in the trough of the great waves crowding before the west wind into that shallow gulf, the more we studied the proposition and the more we threw deliberate cold water on it, the less illusory it seemed. Long before Iskanderun came in view—to give the port its true, historic name instead of the uglier modern one—we had made up our minds that there really was a woman beleagured in a harem against her brother's will, even if not against her own.

As for getting her out, that was another matter. To make any sort of business deal with Achmed McNamara was a dangerous proceeding in itself. As Monty was careful to point out, if we should set the terms down on paper they would have to include the rescuing of the lady, and what court in the world could be expected to enforce a contract that included among its provisions the crime of harem-breaking?

Fred proposed drawing on Achmed McNamara for a million pounds and obliging him to accept the note before we would undertake anything. But, as Monty again pointed out, supposing that Achmed McNamara intended playing a trick on us—as was only too probable—our possession of any such note might be taken as proof of our complicity in some nefarious scheme. He might be able to represent us as the chief beneficiaries in some other crime he was contemplating and about which we actually knew nothing at all.

"It's an old trick all through the East," he warmed us, "to prepare a scapegoat in advance in case of failure."

"Why don't we just carry out the original intention," I proposed, "and simply go and see Aleppo? Then, if anything turns up to corroborate McNamara's yarn, we'll be there on the spot to judge of it."

That was what we agreed upon. We sighted Iskanderun late in the evening and lay to, the captain preferring to keep his offing until dawn. That night Achmed McNamara surpassed himself. The force of his appeal at times was almost poetic. Reckless of our opinion of himself, he swept the strings of all the emotions he supposed us conceivably heirs to, touching on our pride of race, avarice, ambition, religion, superstitions, curiosity, generosity, sportsmanship, charity, good luck and courage, among a host of others.

"Think when you shall come to die, gentlemen all. Dare you look back then and remember this chance that you missed of doing a good deed and at the same time feathering your own nests?"

WHAT convinced us finally that this extraordinary man was telling at least part of the truth and really had set his fat heart on employing us to crack a governor's harem open was his insistence on a full half-share of the profit from the sale of the estate—half and no more, no less. If he had been a trickster out-and-out, merely decoying us into some miserable confidence game, he would certainly have offered us a larger share than half when we stood out so long against him. Had he been deceiving us he could safely have offered us all the loot and no doubt would have done it. He might have pretended to be satisfied with the rescue of his sister. But he stuck vociferously to his first proposal of a half-and-half division, so that we grew convinced that there was really something to divide.

Finally Monty half satisfied him with a promise that had the merit of taking the wind out of his sails for the present without committing us to anything too outrageous.

"All right," he said, "if you can prove to us that your sister is really in the governor's harem against her will and wants to be released, then we'll talk the matter over

in Aleppo. But I warn you, before we would consider taking any kind of action, we should require an unquestionably authentic appeal addressed to us by the lady herself. We would listen to that. Without it we wouldn't even consider the matter."

"I will satisfy you entirely."

"Mind you, McNamara!" Fred warned, "let us get as much as an impression that you're playing tricks, and we'll use all our ingenuity in making things hot for you!"

"As for that," said McNamara, "I can care for myself. At present business is business. I forget about that song you made regarding me. I swallow my pride. I laugh at it. I am good-natured—a good sport. That is because we shall engage in this business together. After that, I shall resume my displeasure as I put on a glove, and you shall be sorry about that song."

"Excellent!" laughed Fred. "I'll add some verses."

"I'm a man of my word!" frowned the Levantine. "Good night, gentlemen all; if your word is as good as mine we are already as good as partners, for a time."

Although we still had no faith in his promises, we liked him a lot better for his manner of making them.

III

ISKANDERUN—Alexandretta—is a long way from being the hideous pest-hole some guide-books make of it and there is a hotel there that can give points and a beating to many a well-known European hostelry. True, at meal-times a Turkish guide takes you by the hand and leads you through twisted streets to a restaurant half-way down a hidden alley, where they feed you *kabobs* on skewers with the cinders sticking to them, but that is a small price to pay in the East for a clean bed and flealessness.

We had all our belongings brought to the hotel under the curious eyes of fifty or sixty Turkish officers billeted there and prepared to stay a week while we got ready for a protracted journey inland. But we had reckoned without Achmed McNamara, our host on his ship and now self-constituted host ashore.

He was not to be denied, nor were his myrmidons. However great his fear of the Turkish government, he seemed to have local influence; even the officers lounging in doorways treated him with genial, half humorous respect.

He sent us servants with a note apiece in English extolling their virtues, until it looked like a tribe that lurked for us in the hotel compound. Then, the second day, he began sending horses, and they were by no means bad ones. No less than thirty arrived for us to choose from, and when we had picked two each and got ready for the time honored Turkish bargain that takes no account of time except to squander it, it was only to learn, to our amazement, that there was nothing at all to pay and only a present to make to the dragoman.

It was not at all agreeable to us to accept valuable presents from McNamara, yet there was no way of making that clear to him, for he himself kept carefully out of our way, after his first visit to make sure we had found comfortable quarters. We refused to accept the horses, but those we had picked out were stabled at the hotel, nevertheless, and fed at some one's expense, certainly not ours. And when we sent out word that we desired to buy other horses on our own account, none came.

So, on the third day, Will Yerkes paid his habitual visit to the United States consul to ask questions, prophesying disappointment all the way, but he came back grinning.

"He says McNamara is a good sport," he announced. "Says he'd trust him."

Thereafter Monty called on the British consul and received much the same report, although he added—

"They do say the man is a clever smuggler."

Learning that we proposed to ride to Aleppo, the British consul applied for a *kavass* for us—a Turkish soldier to act as escort and lend the semiofficial touch that would keep away robbers and perhaps even stand off the beggars. No sooner had the soldier turned up with his hungry-looking mount than we made up our minds to surprize McNamara by starting that very afternoon.

Yet it was we who were taken by surprize, for he came round himself, magnificently mounted, and begged us to not delay any further, but to start immediately and keep only far enough behind him to create an impression of independence.

"If it once gets out that I belong to your party—" he began, but Fred cut him short.

"You're not of our party! We'll deal with any one who brings that charge against us."

"And about our horses," Monty cut in. "Let us have the bill for them, will you?"

"They are not your horses!" he retorted, sitting his own restive mount with a very fine seat for such a stout, squat lump of a man. "I lend them to you because you are proceeding to Aleppo on my business."

Then he did an almost Homeric thing. The sweat of sheer anxiety was streaming down his temples. Most of the horse's restiveness was due to a sense of the rider's uneasy state of mind. Yet he turned at bay, as it were, threw caution to the winds, dismounted, gave the reins to a ragged attendant and strode up close to Monty.

"If you're afraid," he said, "say so now! If you're willing to give me a chance to prove my story is true, come on. If you're not willing—blast and shiver it—own up now, and I'll give the four of you a free trip on my steamer back to where you came from."

Monty laughed like a boy out of school. It was rare to have any one, particularly out of the Levant, impute that sort of motive to our indecisions.

"We intend to go to Aleppo," he said, "at our own expense. We'll give you the chance there you ask for. We're ready to start as soon as we've settled for the horses."

"Curses!" thundered McNamara. "Allah made the English stiff-necked in order that all other men might hate them. It is too late. You must pay me at Aleppo. I will make out the bill when I get there and present it to you on arrival. But for the love of fire and food, make no more excuses!"

That arrangement being perfectly satisfactory, we told him to ride on and gave orders to our own crowd of followers to load our belongings on the weird thing they called an *araba*, which resembled a wagon in two respects: it had wheels and, moreover, it was drawn by horses.

An hour, almost to the minute, after McNamara had ridden away post-haste, we rode out of the courtyard after him, reckless of the future, free as the delicious air we breathed—for it is not true that no healing breezes come to blow away Alexandretta's smells—aware of the green delights of Mesopotamian Spring and light of heart accordingly—as we should not have been had we permitted McNamara to pay our expenses. Stiff-necked the British are no doubt, in spots, but that is mainly because they know from sweet experience what the fruits of independence are.

McNamara, from a varying distance of a mile to a dozen miles ahead of us, exhausted ingenuity in trying to make us hurry over the seventy-mile road that crosses a mountain range and links Aleppo with the sea. But for the very reason that it was a good road through a lovely countryside, well used by a host of men of every nationality, trade and rank, with whom talk in half a dozen tongues was good, who sat by the wayside gratefully to exchange remarks with strangers, we lingered. The more he stormed and sent back messages, the keener our delight became in side-excursions to view historic monuments.

THERE was the pillar, for instance, on which St. Simeon Stylites marooned himself for a tale of years, less than a day's march out of Aleppo but reached by a by-road over the flower-strewn hills, close to the village of Termanin. Wild horses could have borne us past that turning, but not our tame and tired ones, nor any impatient arguments scrawled by McNamara on slips of wrapping-paper and sent back by a ragged runner.

We turned off, singing to Fred's concertina, followed by our own gang and four times their number of unattached wayfarers, who did not recognize the noise as music but liked it nevertheless, if only because it testified to that priceless gift, good spirits. Some of them, no doubt, attached themselves to us because of our Turkish soldier—one lone, lean, ragged veteran on a horse nearly as old as he was. Such is the power of a sword in its scabbard and a uniform in tatters to drive men's fears away. But the most came because Fred sang. For aught they knew he was some new sort of religious fanatic, glad instead of gloomy, and our side-trip to the ruined chapel of Simeon Stylites confirmed that explanation.

There we camped for the third night, scorning the government post-house with its dirt and fleas, out in the open with the ruins of chapel and pillars in full view,

bathed in moonlight, with the riffraff of Asia Minor asleep under our tent-flies, squatting around our camp-fires, getting in the cook's way, commenting on our equipment and commissariat, curious and kind, and wholly un-self-conscious. Nothing less emphatic than whips and goads could have persuaded them that their room could be preferable to their company.

So, when we had eaten supper, it pleased us to decree a great feast of rice and grease and spices, at which all who cared might fall to and eat their fill. Nobody who had not seen could ever believe what quantities of boiled rice the Syrian wayfarer can eat nor the gentleness with which he can be grateful afterward, Moslem or Christian.

We fell asleep amid an atmosphere of mixed blessings and wood smoke. And because we slept well and liked the spot and rather preferred to see the historic place without our uninvited following, we chased the crowd away soon after dawn and spent the whole day loafing at Termanin.

So to Termanin came Achmed McNamara, back from Aleppo on horseback in a prodigious passion, with a three-day beard outstanding from his swarthy cheeks.

"Is this your English way of making haste?" he thundered, for all the world as if we had taken his pay.

What he would have said and done had we cared to travel at his expense was beyond imagination. He roared at us like a lime-juicer boatswain in a hurry to get sail off. So, to calm him a little, Fred sang the offensive song.

"You men would sing while your mothers roasted!" he bellowed at us, believing, perhaps, that his voice was within bounds.

Like some animals, he did not seem to realize that the thunders had their home in him. All ears had to listen when he spoke above a whisper. But Fred's concertina had no ears nor modesty and dinned him down. Rage how he would, McNamara had to bide his time until the chapel of St. Simeon of the Pillar had echoed to the legend of his infamy in rime.

Achmed McNamara, oh, tarara, oh, tarara,
  Left his home in the Sahara for the far Sahara's good.
All decency disdaining, he was warned against remaining,
  It was no use his explaining that he wasn't understood.
His utter lack of virtue was the element that hurt you—
  The vacuum of goodness that no sermoning would fill.
They'd have tolerated vanity or stood for sheer insanity,
  But Mac's unmixed satanity made far Sahara ill.
So they banished McNamara, oh, tarara, oh, tarara,
  And the ladies of the desert now no longer know the thrill
Of the battle-cry announcing that a watchful hubby's pouncing,
  And the screams behind the tent as McNamara foots the bill!

At that stage of the song's development there were already seven verses, and Achmed McNamara had to listen to them all before he could get us to pay any attention to his business. The enforced pause did him good. It enabled him to calm himself and get some measure of self-control. When Fred had finished, and the echoes of the last chorus had gone galloping down the valley, he got off his lathered horse and came and stood almost meekly by the camp-fire.

"Gentlemen all!" he pleaded—something like a ballyhoo man vainly laboring to fill an empty tent. "There is no time for enjoyment. This is serious. This is—oh, my ——! How shall I tell you? How shall I make you see? Listen, then—I will tell you all, from the beginning."

He flung himself down before the fire and began blubbering with great sobs, like a bullock with its throat cut, and the convulsions of his big frame seemed likely to shake the meat from the bones. If he was acting then, or anything but elemental, I, for one, was deceived about him.

"GENTLEMEN all, I searched Aleppo—I searched Antioch—I searched Alexandretta for Turk, Greek, Jew, Arab, Frenchman, Englishman—for any one who dared help me release my sister. I found nobody! Some were cowards—some not to be trusted—all were hopeless—no use! Twice I traveled to Alexandria in hope of finding cutthroats there—men I could hire—who would not be known—who could cross on my steamer—go to Aleppo swiftly—do murder in the dark—seize my sister—escape again! I found none! I found none! Plenty of cutthroats—none to be trusted! Then I found you!"

At that unintended bull we lay back in our chairs and roared with laughter until

the village dogs awoke and set up a chorus of barking.

"Oh, my ——! Gentlemen all!" he implored us. "For the love of God listen to me! If it is Allah's will that my sister be released—and we lie here letting opportunity pass by us—then what are we? Listen! I went to Aleppo. I engaged accommodation for you there, making believe you were great travelers intending to proceed later to Mosul to view the remains of Nineveh. Then I sent word by a sweetmeat seller to the assistant of the eunuch who has charge of that part of the harem where my sister is, saying I had come. She sent back word to me that within a week the governor will give her to be the wife of a Turk named Mustapha Kamil. That man Mustapha Kamil is a monster, gentlemen all, no less! It is he who gave the word for the last great massacre—he who ordered the warehouse burned in which two hundred Armenians had taken refuge—he who cut the fingers from living women in order to get their rings! Two of his wives have died—Allah knows of what complaint. Now he is to take my sister—and all that property—and I am told he has threatened to take me, if he can find me, because my sister in despair screamed through a window to men in the street to find me in Alexandretta and bring me to her.

"Gentlemen all, if that man Mustapha Kamil catches me, the things that will be done to my poor body are worse than hell could ever be! A week from now—one week, gentlemen—and it will be too late to save my sister and all that property!"

Monty drew a bow at a venture—better acquainted with the East than any of us, and so more likely to chance on the key to any situation.

"Suppose we let the property go hang?" he suggested. "Suppose that instead of attempting any harebrained rescue we interview this governor of Aleppo and make a bargain with him—the property against your sister's freedom? Surely you're rich enough to support your sister afterward—in America or anywhere else."

"Oh, no! Oh, no! But yes! Yes! Oh, no! Gentlemen all, how could you propose to me to let a million pounds of money slip through my fingers? You do not know the circumstances—you can not know, or you would not make such proposals. I am not bankrupt but I am trembling on the brink. My fleet of liners is all mortgaged—the interest eats up the profits—I have no money for the repairs that should be made. Unless I get that property, I am ruined!"

"D'you mean," Monty asked him, "that unless you can get the property you don't care what happens to your sister?"

"Oh, no!" he answered gloomily. "Let us go and rescue my sister by all means—by any means. I would rather Mustapha Kamil should have me than her!"

"Now you're talking!" said Will, and I knew by the way he shoved his lower lip out and puckered his eyes as if peering into the future that he was won over to the man's cause—not that Will, would necessarily have admitted it yet.

"But I tell you this—I warn you," sobbed McNamara, "that the governor will laugh at you. Why should he make bargains about what is already in his hands? Why should he let my sister escape to America to tell about Turkish rule? Can he not hand her over to Mustapha Kamil and make a friend of his powerful enemy?"

"The man's right," said Will, blowing smoke rings.

"All that will happen, if you try to bargain with the governor," continued McNamara, warming to his tale and forgetting a little of his grief in the process, "is that he will throw me in prison. Ow! Have you seen a Turkish prison?"

"We can easily avoid that," said Monty. "My servants are under British protection as long as they are in my service, do you understand me?"

"M-n-yes," said McNamara doubtfully.

"Do you care to enter my service?"

"*Effendi*, if I do it makes no difference. The governor of Aleppo will do as he sees fit, not as the law says he shall."

"Yes or no?" demanded Monty.

"Yes!"

"Then I engage you as my dragoman."

McNamara sighed heavily.

"Very well," he said, "but what is the use? They will ask what an owner of ships is doing in the part of a dragoman and will point to it as proof of intended wrongdoing. My only hope is that I may not be recognized."

"Recognized? Take that thick mustache off!"

"Ah, what is the use? These servants—for one piastre any one of them would tell."

"Let them all return to Alexandretta, then," Monty answered. "We can send the *kavass* back in charge of them with an order on the consul for their pay at the other end. You can drive the *araba* with our luggage."

At that proposal Achmed McNamara recovered from the depths of gloom sufficiently to smile.

"I have always said the English have good sense," he commented. "Which of you is the gentleman who will lend me a razor?"

To the almost riotous disgust of all the servants, we sent them packing on the homeward road that night. The *kavass* was the only philosophic one; it was all the same to him which road he took, at what unseemly hour, provided he was paid double for the journey and provided with good food. He coerced the rest, but not without blows.

NEXT dawn we were in the saddle, riding down-hill toward Aleppo, the heavily loaded *araba* laboring along behind us in charge of a fat man with fat lips and an absurdly boyish-looking face. Whoever should recognise Achmed McNamara in that guise and garb, using those expostulations to the horses, would have needed the eyes of a hawk and more suspicion than even the Near East cuddles in its bosom.

So, each leading a spare horse, and with a plausible tale ready of servants who deserted in the night because of some fancied grievance, we came in sight of the ancient Saracenic wall with seven gates and the huge citadel some idiots say was built by Abraham—of the Kuwaik River with its miles of gardens on either bank—and the spreading, wealthy-growing suburbs through which we had to pass.

McNamara had seen fit not to engage quarters for us in New Azizieh, the suburb, where most of the Europeans live, nor in any of the *Khans*—the great barrack-like buildings where travelers, merchants with wares especially, may rent space and care for themselves. He had rented a small house for us at the bottom end of a short blind-alley, in the densest part of the native town, without the wall.

"Here," he said, "not one single person except the beggars will care a continental who you are, or anything about you. Lock the gate then, gentlemen all, and keep the beggars outside."

What he said was likely enough true. If we had come clattering in with a host of retainers behind us and a *kavass* to shout for right of way, there would have been limitless curiosity to meet. As it was, the only persons interested in the sober-looking party of four dusty foreigners with one fat servant were the chance-met urchins whom the said fat servant hired to lead away the horses to some stable of which he knew, a furlong away. We carried the luggage ourselves and left the *araba* horseless in the street.

The house was big enough for twice our number. Like most Turkish houses, its only outer windows were narrow slits in the wall of the upper story. The entrance was through a high door into a small courtyard and the other windows and the house door proper all opened on to that.

It was not the sort of place in which to stand a seige or to hide, once hue and cry were raised, but it was a mooted point whether concealment could help us in any event. We should have to come out into the open to do anything about McNamara's sister and in the event of trouble our only sensible or safe course would be to appeal to our consuls—British and American—immediately.

The speed with which travelers can make empty quarters comfortable, both to look at and to live in, is their sign of experience the wide world over. We set up our chairs and camp-beds, constructed a table out of a broken American export packing-case, spread a cloth over that, unpacked our bags, drove nails and hung hats and rifles on the walls, had a bath in the place beyond the kitchen where the water ewers stood in a row and decided we were at home.

Then, before we had rested in Aleppo half an hour, McNamara returned with new servants and a cook who could do unrighteous things to bits of meat on skewers, as well as make thin, flat cakes and boil rice. When evening fell we were all four suffering from indigestion but otherwise in shape for happenings.

"What's Aleppo like by night?" Will wondered.

"Like any other smelly dark place, unless you've a wise guide," Monty answered. "Nothing to do but sit indoors and twiddle thumbs, Will. Remember, this is the place

that invented the word assassin. The Assassins were a tribe of murderers who waylaid strangers in the Middle Ages. They tell me the town has lost none of its old flavor."

Presently Achmed McNamara returned bearing five hurricane lanterns and dressed, with a red sash round his fat stomach, in the garb of the sort of venial coast-hireling who hunts the ports and preys off well-to-do foreigners. The breed is unmistakable and he looked and acted the part so well that Fred added a verse to the song, describing papa McNamara's former means of livelihood and reasons for escaping from the Levant to the Sahara—outrageous, unholy reasons that made even McNamara, beside himself with nervousness, laugh so that he could not light the lanterns.

"Now, gentlemen all," he said in his best bull showman voice, "we are going within the ancient city wall to a place that might be said to correspond to a London club—the Carlton, let us say, or perhaps rather the Bachelor's, except that membership is not required. It is where the more important citizens come together of an evening. It will be quite in order for your dragoman to enter with you, to explain what you see and to give your orders in Turkish. It is the only place where one can be really sure to see the governor and his friends."

So we armed ourselves very carefully with repeating pistols and a good, stout stick apiece and followed McNamara out into the pitch-dark streets, each carrying a lantern. And, as if they had known and were waiting on purpose, all the miserable street dogs in Asia seemed to emerge out of the night and yap at our heels. It was useless to try to beat them off or kick at them; that only started reprisals and the teeth of those street curs are too unclean for a man to laugh at the idea of being bitten. There was nothing to do but walk gingerly, with a trail of green, glowing eyes and snapping fangs behind.

There were no lights worthy of the name except our own. Here and there a glint like the point of a dagger would betray itself through a keyhole or under a door-jamb, but there were no sounds of indoor revelry to contrast with the outdoor gloom, nor even Turkish music—that antithesis of the glad and beautiful—in proof that life of any kind was being lived.

The dogs did us one good turn. They called attention to us, which was just exactly what we did not want, but, when a pair of presumable footpads rushed out from a dark corner with long blades gleaming in our lantern-light, they tripped over the curs and fell among the pack.

The ensuing fight lacked any kind of glamour. We did not care to shoot, partly for fear of killing the men, mainly for sake of our own privacy; street brawls are no man's business after nightfall, but a shot in the dark gives that touch of modernity that breaks the ancient spell and brings the curious hot-foot. So we beat at the dogs with our sticks; and what with that, and the bitten victims' knives, there was some disgusting work done. Finally the two men, torn to rags, staggered up and ran for cover with a pack snarling viciously behind them. After yelping at us for a minute or two, most of the rest of the curs stayed behind to consider the disposal of their dead and wounded comrades.

AFTER that we eyed every dark corner—and Aleppo is full of them—as if it surely held armed footpads. We went like stage villains on the prowl, led by a fat man more afraid than any of us, until Fred, who came last and saw the humor first, called a halt and leaned against a door to yell with laughter. Somebody who lived in the house and doubtless thought our attentions were meant for him began to pelt us with sticks and lumps of hard mortar from the roof, breaking the glass of Will's lantern with a lucky shot.

"I'm going back," Fred announced, "to find some of those dead dogs and toss them on the rascal's roof."

But Monty would not hear of that and McNamara, urging us to hurry, preached a breathless sermon about the depths of unseemliness associated with a dead dog in the Eastern mind.

"My proposal was to act unseemly," answered Fred. "I want to make the liver and lights of the owner of that house turn into gristle with rage."

"For such an insult he would follow you to the ends of the earth and, if he died, then his son and his grandson after him," said McNamara.

But Fred was in one of his irresponsible moods and affected to care nothing for the Near East's sense of values. We walked

on, he always last, in the wake of McNamara until a gaunt man with a great sword, in the shadow of the gate in the wall, challenged us. Fred asked to see the sword and the man let him handle it. We passed on.

There was a lantern by the gate-side and in its dim rays Fred and the sentry looked like a picture of the present talking to the past. Fred offered to buy the weapon and to his own astonishment was taken up. A minute later he came clanking after us with the long sword at his waist; we inclined to rail at him for wasting time on foolishness, not at all suspecting what influence the bought sword was to have on our immediate future. If we had stopped to think, a night-stick bought or stolen from a New York ploliceman or a saber taken in trade from the life-guard sentry at Whitehall might be expected to produce results of some sort, but in Turkey in Asia one has left the rules of proportion behind.

We passed along the streets ever narrower and narrower, by turnings ever darker, with only the stars overhead and now and then a graceful, slender minaret upreared against the sky to give us reassurance that it was a great city through which we made way. But for the stars and those rare glimpses of tower and roof, it might have been a jungle gorge—interminable, deep, with wild dogs hunting us.

At last we swung down the narrowest, darkest side-alley of all, where an enormous black man with a candle-lantern and a rifle leaned against the wall and looked us over. Seeing us to be Europeans, decently clad and with a servant to light us along, he let us pass, muttering something that ended in Allah.

"What's he there for?" demanded Monty.

"None pass him by night who ought not to enter the place we shall visit," said McNamara.

"What if some one drove a sword through him?" Fred asked.

"You shall see!" said McNamara.

A dim light burned at the end of the alley in a stone niche in the lintel of a very narrow door. Without a word or sign to us McNamara turned in there, his bulky figure filling the opening. We followed in single file. Six paces down the passage we were aware of eyes in the dark that glanced us over, and four black men, bigger than he who had stood alone in the street, took shape out of the gloom. They all had knives and one held a coiled cord in his hand.

"Now you know what would happen," laughed McNamara.

A door slammed behind us and shut off our line of retreat. I nearly jumped out of my skin at the sound of it. Then another door opened in front and our eyes were dazzled by a blaze of light—soft enough really but torture for a moment after so long in the outer dark. At a word from McNamara we set our lanterns down on the floor and followed in.

Immediately the inner door shut fast behind us.

WE FOUND ourselves in a long, wide, stone-walled room, whose vaulted roof was supported on a double row of pillars. There was a feeling of being underground, caused, no doubt, by the crypt-like construction of the place. Little colored glass lamps hung down from the center of each section of roof and stained with a dozen mingled hues the rings of smoke rising from cigarets and Turkish water-pipes.

On benches along the wall, comfortably cushioned in bright red, on seats built around each supporting pillar, on carpets on the floor and on piled-up cushions at the farther end sat men of twenty nationalities. A hum of conversation had died down as we entered, and they all stared at us in silence, continuing to smoke, continuing to sip coffee out of ridiculously tiny cups, but letting fall no word either of greeting or comment.

There were men there of nationalities none of us had ever seen, besides Turks, Armenians, Greeks, Persians, Syrians, Kurds, Germans, Italians and Serbs, and in a moment, after a long, deliberate stare at us, they were all again talking in a babel of low-grumbling tongues, none raising his voice, perhaps because of the echoing vaulted roof—perhaps, too, because a man's friends are mostly dead men and his enemies live too alertly, as the proverb says.

It was clear at the first glimpse that this was no political society. Nor was it a place like Bill's at Alexandria, where democratic principles are practised if not preached. These men were all divided into little groups, each group distinct and on guard against confusion with the rest. Men of a

nation sat together. Turks sat with Germans, and Armenians with any one at all; but the others were exclusive, each to his tongue and clan. Only something one could not at first lay a finger on seemed to hold all the groups in one thrall.

Near the center of one long wall was a low table unoccupied, if that is rightly a table whose legs are a foot high. Cushions were heaped between it and the wall and we sat down on them, curling up unaccustomed legs as best we could, Fred tossing his bought sword on the table with the clatter of a cavalier born to the swashbuckling trade. By the tilt of his trim beard and the laugh in his eye, anything except inaction would amuse him that night.

Achmed McNamara took his seat on a cushion on the floor at one end of the table and eyed Fred with furtive anxiety.

"Men have been killed for presuming too far in this place," he announced.

"The deuce you say!" Fred answered.

He had his concertina strapped over his shoulder like a camera and by the way his fingers danced along imaginary keys it was evident that, whatever the night-owls of Aleppo might think was seemly, his mood was for music.

Nor was it Monty's way to restrain him. Those two, mutually licensed critics of each other's plans and walks in life, invariably faced the unknown with sublime indifference to the direction of the cat's jump. Monty's was the cavalry leader's frame of mind that secretly approves of anything unconventional because it may lead to opposition and developments. Fred had a sort of schoolboy love of throwing a mocking hat into the ring for Monty to fetch out again.

Presently a Turk of the brand-new Turkish type, with his fez cocked at an angle and his pants out of an export bale from Birmingham—a little, pale-faced, spry-footed shrimp with a very neatly waxed mustache—came mincing over to us from some sort of den behind a screen in the farthest corner and asked for our orders. Achmed McNamara ordered coffee and cigarets without consulting us and the Turk repeated the order to a thick-lipped savage in turban and red pantaloons.

"This is the proprietor," announced McNamara and the shrimp smirked. He appeared inclined to indulge the curiosity that exuded from him like a smell.

"For what is the sword?" he asked, making a motion toward it with his smoking cigaret.

"To cut with," Fred announced.

"To cut what?" He spoke quite good English, although he was plainly not of that Turkish class that is always Anglophil.

"Knots. I am a man of scant patience."

"What kind of knots?"

"Nots of any kind," Fred answered, grinning. "I never take no for an answer. Stand here and tell us who the gentry are who dislike one another so, yet come here to breathe the same tobacco smoke. Who are they all?"

Achmed McNamara made violent gestures of warning which Fred studiously affected not to see. Achmed in Bill's at Alexandria had been a thundering bully; here he was a panicy scareling, rolling sidewise on a cushion in wordless anxiety.

The Turk threw an air of cheap importance.

"It would be unwise to attract attention," he said, facing us squarely with his legs apart, "but if you will look behind me you will see no less than the governor of Aleppo sitting cross-legged on the seat against the wall. He is the man with the water-pipe. He to the right of him is Mustapha Kamil Bey, smoking the cigaret in an amber tube. You are keeping good company tonight."

The coffee came and a small box of Turkish Regie cigarets. Fred tossed money on the table.

"I'm not interested in them," he said. "Tell me about some of the others."

"Oh, there are German financiers, engineers, merchants, concession hunters of many nationalities, Turkish officers—all men of active minds. They come to this place, like yourselves no doubt, to learn what is going on in the world."

"The world consisting of Aleppo?"

"Scarcely. The world all leading to Aleppo."

"Show me a German financier."

"That one—the man in a black suit sitting against the pillar, in the direction in which my right elbow is just now pointing. They tell me he could write a check for fifty million Turkish pounds."

"Who would cash it?" Fred asked and the Turk laughed thinly.

"His name is Griffenhahn," he answered. "Doubtless you have heard of him. It is

his habit to buy what he desires. Should he desire one of you gentlemen, for instance, he would buy you outright—if not directly, then indirectly; if not with money, then with the aid of a woman or a horse or social benefits or, perhaps, the jail. I can assure you the jail is entirely at his disposal."

"Does he know your price?" Fred wondered blandly.

The Turk laughed with apparently genuine good-humor.

"If not, that is not for lack of being told," he answered, turning to leave us. "But why should he pay my so great a price until I can make him a suitable return? Patience is a virtue. Each man has his moment of maximum usefulness, even in Aleppo. The thing is to be awake at the proper moment and clear as to the value of one's services."

HE swaggered away with the annoying strut that seems to be the outward sign of inward mental indigestion—a very fair example of the Asiatic who has done with the old order because it restrained his appetites and has wholly misunderstood the new. Impudent assertion of venality was his attempt at frankness. Airing his rank opinions to strangers in his coffee-shop, he thought, proved him man of the world.

I leaned back to look around a pillar and observe Griffenhahn—a fine figure of a man, although with the too square German shoulders padded to look clumsier than they naturally were. He looked as if he would stand more than six feet high. He had the unmistakable swordsman's wrist and a depth and breadth of head that advertised the thinker. The color of his hair and eyes at that distance in that multicolored light was unguessable, but his mouth was good-humored, although too firm at the corners, and his general air was of culture and intellect. There was a German on either side of him, both of whom lacked his evident personal charm. They looked meaner than perhaps they were, by strength of the contrast.

Achmed McNamara leaned over the table and unbosomed himself of terror.

"For the love of Allah, gentlemen all, be careful what you say and to whom you say it! It is true that that is the governor of Aleppo. It is true that is Griffenhahn. It is true that is Mustapha Kamil Bey who is to have my unhappy sister given him. That idiot Feyamil—the unwhipped dog who owns the place—has told the truth, hoping perhaps to see amusement. Nothing delights his heart so much as to see strangers in difficulty. He knows how likely you English and you, an American, are to blurt out what you know. Yet to call a man by name in this place, or to pretend acquaintance afterward on the ground of having met in here, is to pass the unforgivable insult. That man Feyamil is like a scorpion; he bites and stings without waiting to be tickled."

"What the devil did you bring us in here for?" demanded Monty.

"To see! To observe! In order that you might judge of the men against whom you must pit your wits. Look at that Mustapha Kamil Bey! Did ever you see a meaner, more miserable looking man?"

The description fitted perfectly. The bowed, brown-bearded, hollow-eyed man sitting next the governor looked as if meanness had entered into his very stomach and replaced the generous gastric juice with gall. The hand that held the amber cigaret-tube shook like a leaf in the wind.

"That man Griffenhahn," continued McNamara, dropping his voice to the drone that was his closest possible approach to a whisper, "is he who is buying land. Whoever shall acquire my sister's property, whether the governor or Mustapha Kamil Bey or even you and I, must eventually sell to him. He buys on behalf of the Bagdad Railway. They say the German government finances him. He is one of this world's great ones."

"Oh, what rot!" said Monty. "If he's as great as all that, what brings him squatting in this place?"

"Ah, there is entertainment here."

"There's going to be entertainment before I leave, you mean," Fred grinned.

"For the love of Allah, make no rash foolishness! Think, gentlemen all! To arouse the least suspicion is to make success impossible! Yet what hangs on success? My sister's liberty—that valuable property—my steamship line! Oh, be cautious!"

"I don't see that this view of the villains of the piece brings us any nearer to the issue," said Monty. "This stuffy hole doesn't amuse me. As for Griffenhahn and the governor, I can be introduced to both

of them tomorrow morning if that should seem worth while. You forget that, before we consent even to consider taking action, your sister must appeal to us direct."

"That shall happen! Oh, be reasonable, my lord! Surely it is obvious that to stand on ceremony and pay a call on the governor is to insure failure of our purpose. Having accepted the hospitality of the governor or of Griffenhahn, can you thereafter interfere in the private affairs of either? Blast and shiver it, no! You —— English have the faults of your infernal virtues! I knew what I was doing when I proposed to put my case in your hands. I took the best that Allah sent my way. You can not pay a call on them and then act the enemy.

"And can you speak to the governor of his harem? No! Ten thousand times no, blast and shiver it! That is the crime unforgivable in Turkey—the rudeness that means enmity for ever and ever!"

All this while Will sat frowning with his head against the wall behind and an expression of settled gloom about his mouth and shoulders.

"Rotten business!" he whispered to me. "No head or tail to it!"

"Monty has his hand on the way out," I answered. "That stipulation that the sister must appeal to us personally can't be fulfilled—you'll see."

"Rats!" Will answered. "Monty's a man! I know him! He'll no more leave that woman in dutch without a —— hard fight than he'll take money for his honor. He's playing for time, that's all, and conning points. Presently he'll see a way clear—which is more than I can."

"I hope you're right," said I. "My impression is that the case is hopeless and Monty knows it."

"Nothing's hopeless! Next thing you know, Monty 'll turn Fred loose to play the fool. Anything may come of that."

"Even your wedding," I answered sourly.

Optimism without visible foundation from a man with a frown on his face suggestive of sympathetic pessimism is bad for the temper.

Will looked hard at me with a sort of fear behind his eyes.

"D'you know," he said, "I've often wondered just how far I'd go to protect a woman."

"If she were pretty," I said, "you'd go simply as far as she'd let you."

That was slander by inference. Will is as susceptible to good looks as any man in the world, but the veriest hag has only to beckon him to help her out of difficulties. We knew that to our cost. It was the debit side of Will's account, dwarfed to insignificance by the credits that included faithful friendship.

"Why not tell McNamara you'll marry the woman," I grinned. "Then all we've got to do is kidnap the Grand Turk, torture him, make him sign the marriage papers and pack you off on your honeymoon to the States."

Whether or not Monty was playing for time, as Will suggested, time certainly played for us and disclosed, incidentally, the fact that Achmed McNamara, however scared, could keep his own counsel and withhold reasons.

"I still can't see your point in bringing us to this place," Monty repeated.

Instead of answering, McNamara drummed his fingers on the table and nodded toward the far end of the room where there was a screen that hid the kitchen door and the servants only knew what other offices.

Then, if not Achmed McNamara's reasons, at least those of the cosmopolitan guests for being there danced from behind the screen on tiptoe—three of them.

"Straight off a pack of cigarets," Will described them in a whisper to me.

Two of them were not more than ordinarily attractive dancing-girls, plump, as the Asiatic likes them, not at all too warmly clothed and adorned with the usual cherry-red lips and glistening teeth that men the world over seem willing to accept as the symbols of pleasure. They danced with tambourines in the style that is taught in the cheap schools by the Marseilles water-front—mock-Oriental, mock-anything but modest.

The third was otherwise. She was plump too—bare-footed, impudent, red-cheeked like the others. But she entered with the air of entering paradise and laughed with the ring of real pleasure in the game before her.

It was perfectly obvious to any man in his ordinary senses that no clever woman could extract whole-souled satisfaction from the prospect of dancing, even divinely, before that congregation of sensualists.

Yet she was a clever woman or I never saw one. It was not belladonna that made her eyes bright or the praise of the mixed mongrels of Aleppo that put life into her movements and her laughter. Nor was it wholly deviltry that gave her joy in what she did.

"That woman can think," said I aloud.

"She is all the hope we have," groaned Achmed McNamara.

IV

"AH!" said Monty. "At last there's something slightly interesting. Tell us about her."

We all leaned toward McNamara, but the woman was at least equally interested in us. She fulfilled what appeared to be routine by circling the pillars more or less on tiptoe and making mock-profound obeisance to the worthies, but her bright eyes sought us every moment, from every angle.

"Gee!" murmured Will. "She'll wring her own neck!"

"Tell us her name, for instance," said Monty.

McNamara shrugged his shoulders and pouted his fat lips until they looked like a pig's snout.

"Name?" he said. "It changes. Here, just now, she calls herself Fatima. In Algiers she was Gabrielle. Before that, in Marseilles, I have been told she was the daughter of Old Man Larilly whom they all called Cœur de Chat. He was famous for the hare soup he sold in the Rue de la Croix de Malte, but they do say no hare meat entered into it. She had left home before I saw Larilly and he never spoke of her, but the sea-captains who frequented that dining-room used to swear by their wheels and anchors that the old man sold her outright to a Moor."

"Would the French government permit that?" I asked, with all the accumulated innocence of three-and-twenty years.

McNamara snickered.

"There is a law against such sales in every country I was ever in," he answered; "laws also against theft, usury, extortion, drunkenness, lese-majesty, Sabbath-breaking and I know not what else. There is also a theory in all those countries that the women do not wish to be sold, the drunkards do not wish to drink, the thieves would rather get what is humorously called an honest living, the extortioners would rather not extort, and that the majority prefers to keep the Sabbath. Why, blast and blizzard, if a woman wishes to be sold, the only man in Europe who can keep her from it is the Turk! He locks her up!"

Daughter or not of Old Man Larilly of Marseilles, this girl who chose to call herself Fatima and once was Gabrielle knew the trick of focusing attention on herself. Hers was not the sort of daring that displays itself diamond-wise, to best advantage in a splendid setting; the other girls were awkward buffoons compared to her, content to squander improprieties of speech and gesture on owl-eyed, unresponsive men who expected it of them and rewarded them for it with blunt ingratitude. She did the unexpected always, choosing to contrast her will-o'-the-wispishness with their too evident ambition to be caught.

She sang in French when it suited her and only when it suited her, at first without accompaniment—little snatches of song, ending as likely as not in the middle of a verse—as she skipped around another pillar to avoid devouring eyes and tantalize new ones. It became quite clear to us before long that every move she made, however apparently unstudied, was really with the purpose of assuaging her curiosity regarding us.

Presently she waltzed and pirouetted over to the German, Griffenhahn, tossed him a jest or two and was rewarded with a swift-witted retort. She asked him questions about his own country in irreverent colloquial French; for instance whether it was true, as some men said, that the German nation was to adopt the Mohammedan religion.

"We are Moslems to a man at heart already," he answered.

"Then do the Germans have harems?"

"In the good German manner, yes."

"Then I know how Germany is ruled. But are they real harems—legal—under one roof?"

"Ah!" he answered. "As in Turkey, so in Germany the principal objection to that is the expense. But every true German has a hotel heart with never less than a hundred rooms in it. To be a German is to be *gemütlich*, that is to say, to love hugely and at random."

"I do not believe you," she answered, escaping the sweep of his arm.

"Try me!"

"Ah! Ah! Allah gave men noses. I smell before I buy. I will ask first about Germany."

So she had her excuse to come dancing over to us as naively as if that had not been her fixed intention from the first. Her bright eyes had a very shrewd gleam at closer quarters and she took in every detail of our appearance before she came to a stand in front of the low table and, for lack of better introduction, helped herself to a cigaret from our box.

"*Alumette?*"

Will held up his own cigaret for her to light hers from, no more able to withhold response to a woman's blandishments than a skinned eel can keep from squirming.

Already Achmed McNamara rolled back and forward on his cushions in the throes of scenting danger. He had had no chance as yet to learn what we knew of the length, depth and utterness of Will's platonic worship of a whole sex. For that matter the rest of the denizens of the place were in like predicament, so that Achmed's uneasiness was not quite unfounded. Without knowing any of the languages—and we all knew more than a smattering of several—that were rising and falling—*staccato—scherzo—andante*—in a devil's orchestra, it was quite easy to observe that the fair Fatima's attention to us was disturbing equanimity. No pointed remarks were addressed at us; nothing was said aloud that had particular reference to her or us, but there was an atmosphere.

CONSIDERING that she had broken the last possible barriers of reserve between strangers, she sat down on the table and proceeded to quiz Fred in the sort of French that he could rattle off as fast as she, she playing with the sword-hilt as she laughed at his quick retorts—rather in the French style, rebellious against convention. He amused her more than any of us—far more than Will with his too obviously respectful gallantry. And Fred, being in mood for mischief, chose to revel in the rest of the room's resentment, Monty not at all restraining him but rather seeming to approve and smiling rather grimly under his pointed, waxed mustache.

I began to share Achmed McNamara's nervousness, for I could see no possible advantage in beginning our adventure with a riot. Achmed reached past me to call Fatima's attention by plucking at the fulness of her gauzy Turkish trousers. Catching her eye, he said something to her in Turkish and she turned on him in a flash, arrogantly reckless.

"*Poltron!*" she jeered at him. "*Vous mefiez* ——"

Then she changed into jargon English for our benefit and perhaps to balk other ears, for French in the Levant is more often than not the *lingua franca* that the name implies.

"You ssink zat I not know you? You —— ole fool, Achmed McNamara! You shave off mustache—poof! All same you get in a hole and pull ze hole in after you! Any woman whatever she know you once, she know you again in —— viz your visage all entirely *gâché* by ze devil! Such a man as you 'e can not 'ide 'imself, not from a woman!

"You warn me to be cautious? *Poof!* You zink I not know you bring zese new foreigners for somezing vairee special? You own steamboats and you shave off your mustache and come 'ere like a fat, stupid dragoman all for nothing, eh? You zink me fat'eaded, eh? Poof! All because your sister is in ze governor's 'areem!"

That last proof of her incisively good guesswork reduced Achmed to a state of cold sweat and collapse. She had no patience with such easily pricked balloons and turned to Fred again.

"Zat! What is zat? Give it 'ere! Show me!"

But Fred never lets that precious concertina out of his own hands, supposing he is conscious and can by any means help it. He took it off the strap and unclasped it.

"Oh, my ——, gentlemen all!" groaned McNamara. "Such a thing as this has never happened here!"

If his deliberate purpose had been to spur Fred to the commission of social sin, he could not have chosen his words better.

"Oh, am I breaking rules?" he inquired with his head at a bird angle and his laughing lips visible between mustache and beard.

Monty was the only one who could have restrained him then, but Monty laughed with the bark of a hound who has winded his quarry.

Fred's arms stretched outward and the yard-long leather bellows drew a mammoth breath. Then, with a crash that sounded

like the bells of Bedlam, he wrung out a dozen wild chords just—as he expressed it afterward—to let 'em all know the fat was in the fire. Then he dropped into two-four time and "Swanee River."

Will began to sing, of course. Nothing on earth but unconsciousness can stop him whenever the tunes of his native land break forth, and he has a voice that totally lacks what has been labeled "concert quality" while full of such United States elements as vim and pep. The vaulted ceiling took up the sweet refrain and echoed it against the floor and walls in clamorous protest against all things new.

Instantly in rushed Feyamil, the elegant owner of the place, spluttering with indignation.

"Stop! What is this?" he demanded.

But he was too late. Whether by accident of taste and fancy, or genius and design, she who chose to call herself Fatima had taken fire. Fred's crude, unholy music stirred in her veins feelings foreign to her since she had sold fish at a street stall where the polychromatic swarm surges on Sunday mornings toward the Cannabiere, Marseilles. It was out of Marseilles the Marseillaise came and the spirit that gave it birth still lives there, by no means trimmed of teeth and claws.

Fatima seized the heavy, curving saber that Fred had acquired illegally from the guardian of the wall, drew it with all the fire and abandon of red-capped rebellion, leaped to the floor and flung herself into a frenzy of unrestraint.

In vain Feyamil rushed at her to put an end to such irreverent upsetting of Turkish decorum. She whirled the whistling saber over his head and drove at him with the heavy scabbard until he fled like a cat before the cook. Then Fred changed into a cake-walk measure and the eyes of Asia Minor learned what fire may underlie the olive skin and gentle eyes of folk of the opposite coast.

It was not any kind of regular performance. None but the gamins of the French streets or March hares or lambs in April ever dreamed of such amazing steps or did them with such spirit of revelry. Her burning cigaret that she had in her scabbard-hand she flung away from her. It fell in the lap of Mustapha Kamil Bey, who wriggled from it like a vulture suffering from fleas. Her hair, ribboned in tidy sheafs of gold on either shoulder, awoke into burnished waves that knew no law but motion. Beads, ribbons, ornaments fell from her and were scattered among the audience like chaff under the flail. And, if the audience was scandalized, it nevertheless could no more have removed its eyes than the fabled bird can from the python's hunger dance.

Again and again Fred changed the tune. She leaped from strength to strength, frenzy to wilder frenzy. She was tireless, fed, instead of taxed, by violence, borne up, not by music, not by exultation at a row of outraged eyes, but by memory of better days, when whiter men with perhaps the merest modicum of more respect for woman clapped hands at her outbursts. The birthright, too long disregarded, now roused her to rebellion against the slavery she despised.

The two other women did not despise their slavery. They read their master's disapproval—solemn, glowering silence and eyes afraid to wander lest a neighbor detect embarrassment—and became themselves dutifully scandalized. More than once they ran with outspread arms to stop her in mid-course, only to be swept aside like weeds by the wind.

Yet, Fatima being human after all and her physical way of life redeemed from deadliness only by the obligation to dance often, the thing had to have an end. The tide of lower sense, swept back for a little while by her volcanic uprising, returned for revenge and overwhelmed her in womanly weakness. She stood swaying, dropped the scabbard to cover swimming eyes with her hand, dropped the saber with startling clatter of steel on stone, turned once or twice in delirious effort to overtake the whirling panorama and collapsed, sobbing for breath and maybe other things, on the milk-white tiles.

IT WAS illustrative of the spell she had fought against and for a few mad minutes overcome, that none of the worthies made a move to pick her up and the other girls did not dare. She lay, heaving and sobbing, within five feet of the German Griffenhahn and he watched her with the interested smile of the savant viewing an experiment. It was wonder he did not take his watch out and time the battle between breath and death.

It was Will, idolizer of Woman in the

abstract and swiftest gallant who ever flung his decency into a ring to fight for it against whatever odds, who was first to go and comfort her. I went with him because Will was our true friend and a blind man could have seen that the racial, religio-fanatical gorge was rising. Besides, the girl was heavy; the Grand Turk loves his dancing-women by the hundredweight.

Between us we gathered her off the floor and carried her, still sobbing with great gasps, to the cushions we had sat on. There Will sat beside her so that she might have manhood between her and the crowd. I got between Monty and McNamara.

"That is the end of my affairs," said McNamara very sadly. "Oh, but blast and shiver it! To think that my sister's fate and my own fortune should be sealed by a dancing-girl in this place!"

But nobody sympathized very much just then with McNamara. We had too many rising interests of our own in addition to a woman—on our hands for all we knew—whose company and past associations were not likely to shed glamour on us.

The reactions of other men have always interested me a lot more than my own emotions and it amused me just then to observe that Monty, who alone of all of us might be expected to suffer socially should tales about him and this dancing-woman get abroad, was the least concerned. McNamara, on the contrary, who had no social caste to lose, nor much of anything if his tale about mortgages were true, was more upset by the thought of ruin at a dancing girl's fell touch than at loss of sister and estate—little though he liked the latter prospect.

The thing of first concern, likely to lead to swiftest difficulty, was the saber. We had left it where she dropped it, having arms full enough without the cutlery and heads too excited for discretion. I jumped up and overturned McNamara in sudden determination to get the weapon and scabbard off the floor before anybody else should think of it.

But I was too late. There were two men ahead of me, both Turks. Feyamil, owner of the place, now returning like a runaway cockerel to crow and strut, picked up the scabbard. Another, younger, even loathlier-looking upstart, who wore much too valuable linen, pounced on the saber and examined it.

"What shall I do?" I asked, returning to the table. "What do you say? Shall I go and demand the thing and take it if he refuses? Or shall we deny all knowledge of Fred's trophy?"

"I don't know yet," said Monty with a sort of grim amusement flickering on his lips. "Sit down! Wait and see!"

The younger of the two Turks—he with the lingerie—reached out a manicured hand and demanded the scabbard. Feyamil refused. Promptly the younger man cuffed and kicked him and in the scuffle that followed snatched the thing away, striking him with it over the face and shoulders half a dozen times.

"Oh, Allah, All-merciful!" groaned McNamara. "That young devil is Haroun, son of the governor! Look how the old man beams on him! Apple of the dissolute old eye—scourge of Aleppo!"

It was certainly true that the governor approved of this young weed and was at pains to show it. Like many an old Turk, whatever his private lusts and public tyrannies, he wore his rank with dignity and looked, with gray beard and sober mien, preeminently decent. Probably the weak worship of degenerate sons is only proof of parental viciousness the wide world over, but he was a perfect picture of age that claims honor for itself and condones dishonor in its son, more than condones—protects, approves.

He chuckled at the slaps with the scabbard that raised welts on Feyamil's face. He rocked on his cushions in grim amusement as the youngster kicked at his retreating victim and pricked him to rout with the saber-point. Then he called for the saber and examined it himself, all eyes in the room turning at once to us, presumably owners of the weapon.

"Looks as if I bought trouble for us all when I paid a few shillings for that thing," Fred admitted, grinning. "I'm willing to be scapegoat."

"Down one, down all!" Will answered across Fatima's body. She was still sobbing, with her head on his shoulder and his arm around her, but was recovering fast. His dark jacket was a mess of rouge and powder. "This gang doesn't pass the buck to one member, not while I belong to it."

"If the governor charges one of us with crime in connection with the ownership of that sword," said Monty, with every trace

of amusement vanished from the firm line of his lips, "I shall very likely have to claim privilege. I detest the thought of announcing myself, a privy councilor of England, in connection with a brawl in this place. But I shall lead with the ace if I'm forced to trump."

"I don't believe he will—in here," said I. "McNamara told us it was the unforgivable sin to call a man by name in here. Surely the governor won't name himself!"

"He is right," said McNamara, gloomy as a man with both legs in the grave, "we still have that chance left us."

It was evident in a minute that the governor recognized the saber as city property, or perhaps as his own personal belonging, for it was quite as likely as not that he pocketed the public funds and armed a private guard for private purposes with weapons of his own selection. It was also as clear as daylight that he chose to pigeonhole the excuse for applying screws to us, for future use if need be. He returned the sword to the scabbard, looked piercingly at us across the room through the eddying layers of tobacco smoke and rose to go, saber in hand.

Before he left he glanced to left and right of him, as if to challenge disloyalty. At once every man in the room who might presumably believe himself beholden to the governor for leave to prosper got up and followed him, not one man stopping to pay his score or make excuses to the unhappy Feyamil, lost between self-commiseration and rage at us, the authors of his trouble.

THE exodus left the room almost empty except for Haroun, the governor's son, only a few nondescripts on cushions here and there continuing to smoke and sip. Griffenhahn, after a minute's counsel with himself, avoided Haroun's polite overtures by stretching his tall frame and striding over to us.

"Where are you from?" he asked. "What are you doing here?"

Moved by some intuition beyond the grasp of the rest of us, Monty took pencil and the back of an envelope and wrote down the address of the house McNamara had rented for us.

"That is where we are staying," he said.

"Names?" asked the German.

"Not in this place!"

"Hah! My own is Heinrich von Trottrich Griffenhahn. You see I am not afraid to mention it!"

"Fear is rather an ugly word," said Monty quietly; "discretion is free for all."

The German changed his tactics.

"I have seen you before," he said, "somewhere."

"You've no invitation," Monty answered, "but you have permission to see me again, if that should suit you."

Again the German switched.

"I'll give you a piece of advice. That woman—she belongs to the house, you know. Better let her alone and avoid trouble. Young Haroun has a notion to buy her from Feyamil. Feyamil is in debt and daren't refuse. Be advised and keep her at arms' length! If you don't know who is Heinrich von Trottrich Griffenhahn, you soon will. Come and call on me. All Aleppo knows where I live."

"Not at all," Monty answered. "If you're as big as you seem to think, you should know more of the world. You'll call first or keep your distance!"

"Well," the German laughed, "you're used to society at any rate. Take my advice about that girl. Give her the cold shoulder. Good night."

He swaggered out in time to be counted as having followed the governor's lead, yet not too soon to preserve his own name for independence. Haroun scowled after him, snapping thin, vindictive fingers behind his own back. The instant the door had slammed behind Griffenhahn's retreating figure, Haroun came and sat on the broad seat nearest us, looking toward us with his back propped against a pillar—one of the eight that supported the vaulted roof. Fatima was quite recovered by that time, physically at any rate, but clung to Will's shoulder like seaweed to a rock, fearful of letting go the only refuge in sight.

Haroun watched her with glittering eye, sitting quite still with his legs crossed on the seat. Feyamil, owner of the place—of anything except self-confidence just then—watched Haroun furtively. The two other dancing-girls made the best of a bad evening's business by posturing and giggling for the very few remaining visitors, most of them Kurds and Albanians. There was one Japanese, blandly indifferent to everything except his cigaret and coffee, for Aleppo's boast is not vain that all roads lead to her.

Presently Fatima listened to the voice of reason warning her that there must be limits even to Will's strong patience. She opened her eyes and looked about, doubtful whether to smile for friendship or weep again for sympathy.

Instantly Haroun's lean forefinger crooked itself and beckoned. He said not one word. He made no other signal. But he beckoned and grinned with the diabolical confidence of one who knows he must not be disobeyed.

Fatima shuddered in every inch of her being and smothered a scream.

"Don't be a fool," Will counseled. "Don't go to him—you don't have to!"

Haroun beckoned again — wordless, shameless, perfectly confident of the outcome.

"Oh, my ——! You not know! Zat *canaille* of a 'Aroun, 'e know all about it! If I not go to 'im, zen 'e buy my debts from Feyamil. Zen 'e own me! Oh, my ——!"

"How much do you owe Feyamil?" demanded Will, the instant *preux chevalier*, and Monty caught my eye and laughed.

" 'Ow should I know? Feyamil, 'e know! Feyamil, 'e writing down always double. Once I pay 'im in full. Feyamil, 'e saying zen I owe 'im more as ever."

Haroun kept on beckoning, patient in only one particular, as a cat is patient with a mouse.

"What is use?" Fatima wailed. "I go to 'im. Better go now zan wait and make 'im angry."

"You don't have to go," said Will, and she turned her head to look into his eyes, conning them with the hunted, doubtful keenness peculiar to women of her class. The act broke the spell of Haroun's evil eye, as that individual was quick to realize.

He got to the floor and swaggered over to where the discouraged proprietor sat brooding over an unlighted cigaret.

"Zere! I told you! 'E go now an' buy my debts from Feyamil. Zen you see what 'appen."

For that once at any rate she was at sea regarding the brute's method. Knowing no Turkish, and too far away to have heard in any case, I was perfectly sure that no offer of money changed hands. He was content to make threats and Feyamil was eager to submit. Presently the two came toward us, one swaggering and smirking, the other with hands crossed in front of him in the attitude of unconditional and not responsible obedience.

"Now you see!" sneered Fatima, scornful of fate and all optimism.

HAROUN had picked up his riding-whip from the floor, where it had lain all evening—one of those imported, whalebone things, more than a yard long, bound with gold around the leather handle. He played with it jauntily, in illustration of his relish over our coming discomfiture. At a halt, with legs apart in front of us, he nudged Feyamil, who spoke at once with the rapid delivery of extreme distaste combined with insolence.

"That woman belongs to this place. She is to come away at once." He added something for Fatima's benefit rapidly in Turkish.

But Fred Oakes, past master of Arabic, knows Turkish enough to pass the time of day and to understand much more than is meant for him. He sat bolt upright suddenly.

"You scullion!" he barked. "You dirty little squirt! Out of my sight before I whip you!"

He jumped to his feet and Feyamil fled across the room. Haroun, however, stood his ground, sure of the immunity that hovers over sons of Asian governors.

"She is to be mine. I order her to come with me," he announced in mincing English.

At that stage of proceedings Achmed McNamara entirely lost his nerve and whatever of common sense was left him.

"Gentlemen all!" he bellowed in his huge bull voice, tremulous with fear and vanished hope. "In the name of Allah the compassionate, don't offend this important personage! This gentleman before you, this nobleman, this son of a high official should be greeted with *salaams* of respect. Not to rise and greet him is an insult. Only ignorance excuses your attitude. Now you are not ignorant. Rise in your places, gentlemen all, and show him respect."

We did not rise, of course. In fact, in the absence of any immediate obvious danger, we were all more interested in the new quirk of McNamara's mind than in the obviously contemptible indecency of Haroun. Seeing his prayer for social observance ignored, poor McNamara threw all wisdom to the winds and clasped Haroun about the knees.

"Mercy!" he bellowed. "Forgiveness!"

Forgetting whether he spoke Turkish, French or English, he let the fear flow out of him in bellowing agony, doubtless with pictures before his mind of fat men like himself whose tortured bodies he had seen thrown out of Turkish prisons for the crows to finish off.

"They do not know! They are foreigners! How should they understand, *effendi*, that the great ones of the earth are to be fawned upon. Take your woman and go, *effendi!* Go and forget us all! Let your shadow lengthen until San Sophia throws the lesser one—only go away and leave me to argue with these fools."

Fawning on Haroun had exactly the effect that it always does have on his type of degenerate of whichever continent. He spurned McNamara away from him and swelled with windy insolence. The whip that lay across his open palms seemed like sudden inspiration. He closed his fingers and cut at McNamara twice as a reminder that he had touched an aristocrat with unbidden, unblessed fingers and should not offend a second time.

I saw Fred Oakes slip the concertina strap from off his shoulder, a thing he never does unless he feels the fighting blood flow hot behind his ears. But Monty frowned at him. My own opinion was that Achmed McNamara had earned a whipping and it did not much matter whose whip did the work.

"I grow impatient," announced Haroun. "I have said that woman is to come with me."

Nobody answered him. McNamara crouched belly downward on the floor with his great jaws agape; even the woman seemed to sense at last that all she need do was acquiesce, one way or another. Let her choose the Turk and we would let her go with him—choose not to go and we would make a stand for her, capable beyond her imagining.

"Tell 'im to go to ——!" she said suddenly—slowly, as if seeing a new, dim, distant light.

"No need to tell him that," laughed Fred. "Hell is his sure, near destiny."

Haroun began to realize that his presence lacked any kind of awe for us. Where a white man would have flushed, he darkened as if the shadow of a cloud had covered him. He was a very ill-bred pup. Men's mothers are not chosen in Turkey for their probable effect on the race and they do their best in the curtained stupidity of harem life to rob young sons of the slightest trend to manliness. But there was no excuse for him.

Will was the nearest to the girl. Impatience told him Will was the impediment between him and desire. He leaned over the table and struck Will smartly on the wrist with the whalebone riding-whip.

"You hear me?"

McNamara sent up a bellow of unbelieving agony of fear. Feyamil, the proprietor, emptied his shrill lungs in a shout for servants. Fred tried to be first to avenge the impudence, but he was between Monty and the woman with his knees thrust under the edge of the low table. He and I were both left like common dawdlers by Monty's lightning flash. Will was hampered by Fatima, who clung to him as if he were the only rock and she overtaken by the deluge. Besides, he was taken by surprize and not quite so swift as we to appreciate the depth of the creature's insolence.

I HAVE witnessed many a thrashing, but none the peer of that. Once I saw a Chinaman lambasted by the cook of a British lime-juicer for stealing his false teeth. Another time I narrowly missed being the victim when a bluenose boatswain hunted for and found the man who had set a light to cotton waste in the forepeak. That came close to being murder. Then, I saw a two-year-old retriever whaled for sucking pheasant eggs. That last was the nearest in point of physical resemblance to what Monty did.

He jumped for him as nobody in the world would believe a man could jump who had not seen red, racial war. I thought for a second he would break the Turk's neck, but he took him with his left hand by the scruff of it and with his right reached leisurely for the whalebone whip.

With a yell that betokened dawning enlightenment as to what he might expect, the Turk unwisely fought for the whip for a moment. That cost him a twisted wrist and saved him nothing of the punishment to come.

Servants—thick-lipped and woolly-headed—leather-skinned and woollier-witted—

Turk, Ethiopian and mixed Armenian—ran in at the proprietor's call to interfere. But Fred, Will and I saw fit at just that juncture to draw pistols and stand them off.

"Ah-h-h!" sighed Fatima luxuriously then.

Pistols meant more to her than all the assurances of four unknown casual guests in that den.

"Ow-aie-ow!" screamed the Turk, flailing with both hands to fend off the descending whip but only driving Monty to attack new surfaces. "Ow-yow-ah-rrgh!"

Swish! Swish!

The thin, supple whip rose and fell with that sincere appreciation of the minute details and broad aspects of a task that comes so close to being art. Monty had seen something more than half a hundred Summers and the Turk not twenty-five, but the life of a British cavalry officer, toughened by pig-sticking, polo and tiger-hunting in the Rajputana Hills, has some advantages in the scale against the high life of young Turkey.

The Turk was not flabby exactly; he could kick and fight sufficiently to elevate the incident from mere routine to the ranks of minor indoor sport. He had imagination in plenty to suffer with and a cheap class pride, based on nothing better than effrontery, that helped him to hate the indignity. But he had no earthly chance of defending himself or of shortening the experience of a minute. He kicked mostly at random, although he did find Monty's shins a time or two. But he could not bite because Monty's steel-wire fingers gripped his scruff and shook him by it like a puppy.

The Turk's yells were exceeded all the while the thrashing lasted by McNamara's bellowings.

"Have pity on him! Oh, gentlemen all, you sign your own death-sentences! His father will put us all in jail, and then—oh Allah! Let him be! Oh! Oh! Oh! You will kill him! Be wise! Be wise! Have discretion now! Oh! Oh! Cease for a minute—set him on his feet and make a bargain with him—immunity for you, mercy for him. Gentlemen all—can you others not stop him? This is going to be the end of all of us! That man's father is the most powerful governor in all Asia!"

On the other hand, Feyamil, the proprietor, and his servants, now that we commanded the situation with our pistols, looked on in philosophic calm not unmingled with appreciation. The accepted manner of avenging the minor, and even some major insults, throughout all Turkey is by beating. Their tales are full of such incidents; scarcely a street story-teller sends a crowd away without recounting how the hero of the piece gave some one else a beating. There was nothing new about this, except the splendid thoroughness with which the whalebone was laid on. The fact that the whip was the victim's heightened the onlookers' sensations. When Monty at last flung the Turk away into a corner and the whip after him, they let him lie.

But then came Feyamil, all arrogance again, now that the bully lay incapable of anything but agony. If there was any advantage to be snatched from the situation, he proposed to have it, and he pounced on the bone of contention astutely enough. He ordered Fatima, in Turkish, to get up and leave the room.

"Don't you do it!" advised Will. He and I kept our pistols well in evidence. Fred put his away in order to be free to use his fists, having a notion to fight and no hope of it as long as he showed a weapon.

Feyamil leaned over the low table and reached out a hand to seize the girl but froze to immobility while yet half-way—one eye down a pistol muzzle, one on Fred's fist.

"She belongs to the house!" he asserted.

"By what right?" asked Monty calmly.

"Let her pay her debts," the Turk sneered, recovering position and deciding that after all Monty, guilty of the violence, was the one to be brow-beaten. Some men have no luck in judgment.

"What debts—to whom?"

"The money she owes me. By Allah, you ought to pay it! You come here and empty my place by the mere offensiveness of your presence! Not satisfied with that, you fight in here——"

"Pardon me," Monty interrupted with his merriest smile, "admonish is the word. Not satisfied, I admonish. Pray continue."

"You make the woman valueless by causing her to be the center of disturbance. It is you who should pay every piastre she owes."

Will's eyes blazed at that, every fiber of his altruism thrumming to the tune.

"Do you want to have your debts paid?" he demanded and the girl looked at him for a minute in dumb wonder.

Feyamil began to see a triumphant ending to the night's misfortunes and stood with legs apart and arms folded on his breast.

"To pay the woman's debts is your only chance to escape imprisonment," he announced, deciding that a cigaret would add to his air of authority.

He stooped to help himself from our package. I was just in time to strike the box away from under his hand and send it spinning, scattering its contents.

"Dogs of your type feed from the floor. Help yourself!" I said and he grinned at me with that peculiar malice men reserve for the unexpected absolute affront.

"You pay him?" wondered Fatima stupidly. "You buy me? Which of you?"

Will snorted. Then he laughed, remembering Achmed McNamara and the Mormon argument.

"Slavery ceased some years ago where I come from. Besides, we shouldn't know what to do with you. No, if we pay your debts, you go free."

"Free? I? In Aleppo? Oh la, *quelle innocence!* But Feyamil would cheat you. Feyamil is all lies. You agree to twenty, 'e say forty. You agree to 'undred, 'e say t'ousand. You agree to ten t'ousand, 'e say million. Pay 'im until 'is *porte-monnaie* it burst Feyamil 'e go an' fetch a sack to put much more in."

I CALLED Monty's attention then to the armed guard in the passage between the two outer doors. They had entered and were clearing the room quietly of other guests. One of them had a revolver as big as a highwayman's horse-pistol and they were all heavily armed.

Promptly, and without a word to me, Monty made another of his lightning moves. In a second he had Feyamil by a leg and an arm and had dragged him down between himself and Fred, forcing him so hard against the wall behind that the astonished rascal belched all the wind out of his lungs and sat there gasping like a fish.

"And so," exclaimed Monty in his level, admonishing tone of voice, "if we've any trouble with your armed servants, you'll be the first to suffer. Advise them to keep their distance, won't you?"

As soon as he had his breath back, Feyamil decided that was not the time to try conclusions with us and said something to the armed guard that sent them to the cushions by the far wall.

"Keep an eye on them!" said Monty to me; so I could not watch what followed at our end of the room, although I heard every word of it.

"We're in no hurry," said Monty. "The streets before dawn don't tempt me. Too many dark corners and long knives. Let's take our time."

"Gentlemen all!" exploded McNamara, recovered at last from speechlessness. His bull voice was almost like a bomb. "Go now! Get out of here! See that Haroun—look at him! He recovers—he will go presently! Do you think he will go to prepare for you a bed of roses? Leave that Fatima; this is her place! Let her pay her own debts, gentlemen all! If you take her away, what can you do with her? If you let her go, she will be in this place or in another like it within the day, for what else can she do? Where can she hide? They will simply track her down and take her. Yet, will you keep her yourselves?"

"Oh, shut up," ordered Fred. "Nobody can even think when you open your mouth."

"This is no time for thinking, gentlemen all. This is time to run away. There is only one thing at all to do. By Allah, we must run! Come back to the house! Wait there twenty minutes while I bring the horses. Gallop for the coast!"

"McNamara," said Monty, "your advice would be perfect if it weren't for the certainty of pursuit."

"Oh, Allah! Oh, All-merciful, All-wise——"

His prayer was interrupted by the sudden, noisy arrival of three men in Turkish costume who entered the room at a run, shouting words we could not understand but that included the word Haroun several times repeated. Seeing the governor's son sprawling with his head on the pillow to which he had dragged himself, they ran and pounced on him, lifting him not at all tenderly, but accompanying the act with great shouts of "Oh-oh!" and angry grimaces at us.

At Haroun's command they lifted him between them and carried him past us with

his feet barely touching the floor, stopping just long enough in front of us for him to say ten words to Feyamil.

"There!" announced Feyamil when they had borne him out of the room. "You heard what he said to me? Fatima is to await his pleasure. You shall not fail to feel the heel of his displeasure."

"Oh, Allah!" groaned Achmed McNamara.

Then in a sudden random recovery of the former bombast, he stood up and thundered at us with both fists clenched, gesticulating like some barrel-pounding preacher of the wrath to come.

"Come with me, you —— fools! To —— with the estate! My sister must take her chances; she will at least be married and have property of her own! Leave that Fatima and come away!"

"Be still, you idiot!" said Monty.

"I will not be still! I adjure you! I order you! I——"

"You'll exhaust my patience in a minute. Do you think we have come so far only to turn back with nothing accomplished? You are an able dragoman but a poor sportsman, Achmed. Will, have you found out whether Fatima wishes to leave this place?"

"She'll come sure enough," said Will.

"But does she want to come? That's the point."

"I come quick as ——!" announced Fatima. "I come anywhere. You all get kill—zen me too!"

"All right," said Monty. "Feyamil, listen to me! If that girl owes you money, make out a proper bill tomorrow, have it witnessed and certified by some one in whom we can have a little confidence and present it to me. Then I'll pay it."

"But how shall I find you?" grumbled Feyamil.

"Ask that German fellow Griffenhahn. He has my address. He'll tell. You fellows," he said, turning to us, "I'll be dashed if I don't see daylight through this business. Let's use it instead of real daylight to go home with. Somebody see that Fatima gets some sort of covering."

Will attended to that. He drew his pistol again and made one of the other women bring a flowing cloak and black *yashmak* from behind the scenes. In two minutes Fatima was a figure of black mystery.

"Now!" said Monty. "McNamara, you go first!"

"Oh, Allah, I am afraid! Knives in the dark, my lord!"

"Do you hear me? Go first! Stop and light the lanterns at the door. You fellows walk one each side of Fatima and one behind. I'll follow behind McNamara to lend him courage. Are we ready? Then forward all!"

We did not get away, though, without a demonstration by the enemy. The guards of the outer door, seeing Feyamil released from between us and imagining their master to be master of his house again, intercepted us with their backs to the exit and a great show of loosening hilts. But Monty was too quick for them. He pushed McNamara at a run in front of him and they divined McNamara's condition of mind too well to take that danger seriously. They were satisfied to call on him to halt at two yards' distance, and he did.

Then Monty sprang and the rest was fist work, swift and skilful. Two were knocked down and the rest were sent reeling backward before they could draw their weapons. The next event was the slamming of two doors in turn behind us and our emergence into starlight and the comparatively speaking clear air of the alley.

"But we shall be murdered in the streets!" moaned McNamara. "We shall not reach home alive!"

V

WE HAD laughed at ourselves as we came because of the figure of prowling night adventure that we cut. Now we proceeded to laugh ourselves home again, not so loudly, because of the genuine danger, but with even more appreciation of the humor of it all.

Fred Oakes was for marching in front with the concertina going full blast. Since Monty did not want to keep our destination secret, Fred could see no sense in anything but noise and vowed that a tune or two would far more likely keep our enemies away, for fear we were decoying them, than attract them toward us. He may have been right, but Monty would not listen and Fred had to content himself with such tomfoolery as stalking shadows spider-fashion and pouncing on them with a yell.

"You know the story of the missionary and the tiger?" he explained. "Tiger crouched. Missionary crouched. Missionary recalled the text about the devil fleeing from you if you're bold. Missionary sprang first. Couldn't see the tiger's tail for dust and stones."

Even Achmed McNamara laughed at him between paroxysms of chattering teeth and cold sweat. Only Fatima, draped like the figure of death and awfully respectful of the Moslem law denying laughter or any self-advertisement to women in the streets, kept silence, staring straight ahead through the tiny *yashmak* eyeholes.

It was she who really saw the figure of a man go slinking into shadow ten yards ahead of us and passed the alarm. McNamara fled incontinently, set a foot in a puddle of Aleppo sewage and fell into it, bawling his sorrow to high heaven, whereat somebody pelted him from a roof. Presently he rejoined us, smelling atrociously and too busy spitting to speak or swear.

Nobody was in time to stop Fred. The spirit of mischief was still working in him and an anecdote suggestive of unexpected action scarcely off his lips. He began to creep along the right-hand wall with the knee-action of a murderer in pantomime and had reached the shadow down which the man had slunk before Monty or any one could prevent. There he crouched. There he unslung his concertina and removed the catch.

There are sudden noises of a cat-fight in the dark that remotely resemble, in wealth of hatefulness and snarled inharmony, the war cry of a concertina with its keys all touched at once. Only the concertina is immensely louder and richer in suggestiveness of war.

Fred pounced and touched off his clanging instrument, emptying the bellows with all the strength of both arms, shaking them to throw a sort of demon laugh into the din.

Three men rose out of the same shadow and cut and ran for dear life, scampering down-street as if the grave-yards had given up revengeful dead.

"What did I tell you?" he demanded, bowing to complete the performance, but his nerves in fact on end and his very beard bristling with excitement.

A moment later he stooped and picked up something.

"Look here!"

We gathered around him with our lanterns and McNamara bellowed with new fear.

"What did I warn you, gentlemen all? If that is not the same sword you bought from the city watchman, it is another like it. That is the property of the governor of Aleppo. We are all dead men!"

"Can a dead man feel?" asked Will. "I'm going to kick you, McNamara!"

"Oh, Mr. Yerkes, no! Allah! This is no time for horse-play!"

"Play nothing! There—ere—ere! Take that! Next time you open your fool mouth I'll drive my foot into it up to the heel! D'you understand me? Don't dare answer!"

Under the compelling spell of violence the Levantine controlled himself. But he was so afraid to walk alone that each of us in turn was hampered to exasperation by the treading of his toes upon our heels or his elbow searching out our ribs. At last we made him walk beside Fatima—to protect her, as Will explained. I heard her threaten to raise the veil and spit on him for crowding her into a pool of mud, but if she had to serve as scapegoat at least that left us free to scout and skirmish.

Most of the skirmishing was with the street curs that awoke out of invisible lairs and flew at us savagely. Fred slew more than one with the captured saber. But we took two more human shadow-lurkers by surprize and hunted them until they were lost down by-lanes. If they, too, had been sent by the father of the wastrel Monty whipped, to waylay us and pay the reckoning, they probably took back an account of our numbers and prowess that made their masters pause and think.

When we reached our house at last and slipped in through the creaking door in the wall, we could not be sure whether we had been followed home or not.

"Not that it matters," as Monty was quick to assert.

"Why not?"

The sheer impossibility of defending our fortress, or of escaping from it unseen should that seem the way of discretion, rather took heart out of us now that we stood within the wall.

"That German Griffenhahn knows where we are and before long they'll know he knows. They won't dare force the door to do murder for fear of the excuse it would

give him for blackmailing. He'd be likely to make them pay too high for holding his tongue."

Achmed McNamara, presuming the embargo on mournful utterance to be removed now that we were within walls, went to a corner of the courtyard and prayed noisily, not without gigantic sobs. His prayers were to Allah, but the tongue was English and the form was of a litany built of fragments from at least three Christian rituals. He offered candles to the Mother of God and vowed there was no god but God, nor any prophet but Mohammed, in one breath.

We went in and left him to his litanies. The problem on our hands was how to dispose of Fatima—a problem distinctly ours, not hers. She, with the *yashmak* off again, was all agog with a Marseillaise spirt of mischief and unrighteous curiosity to know what four single men would do with her. The last thing she seemed to expect or desire was solitude behind a closed door.

"Who shall defend me then from Achmed McNamara?" she asked, perplexed.

The situation could have become tragic at any minute if we had dared lose sight of its humor. The woman was so used to being preyed upon, the chattel of any fulsome cad with money enough to fee her masters, that it took time to convince her she was in clean hands.

We parried her puzzled questions with jokes, ignored her astonishment, refused to let her dance for us, behaved as if nothing at all was serious in a world entirely meant for laughter and she no more than a common occurrence—one more bright planet spinning across our orbit in the night. At last it dawned on her that we asked no price for the risk we had shouldered on her account.

Then came three wretched minutes when she asked to give, since we were not disposed to take. Three more minutes of abject grief, when it seemed to her that all she had to give us was refused as not good enough. Then more beweilderment—and at last the dawn.

The first soft twitter of birds and the first faint color of the coming sun entered through our open window with the dawning understanding that in so far as manhood gave us any power at all we gave her back full womanhood. Women are quicker than men to understand, when the process has once begun with the entering wedge, and she understood then, without our saying it, that life for her might begin anew that minute, if she cared. The past might clutch, but it could only hate and hurt, not hold or kill.

We got her to go to sleep after that on a camp-bed in the little kitchen place, without a qualm for McNamara, although his snores from our pile of saddlery, where he had made himself a comfortable nest, were self-assertive as a storm at sea. Then three of us slept for an hour or so, Monty sitting on guard with his perennially absorbing chessmen out in front of him. When we awoke we held council of war.

"OUR trump card, as I told you," said Monty, "is my identity."

"It 'ud look lovely in the papers," Fred assured him. "The Earl of Montdidier and Kirkudbrightshire, P.C., K.P., D.S.O., etc., arrested in Aleppo for eloping with a favorite of the governor's son. Released from jail on representations made by the Foreign Office. Splendid! Fine! We've got to see this thing through on the soles of our shoes, Didums—no appeals to Cæsar."

"Say!" said Will. "You guys have hold of this stick by the wrong end. I'm the goat. I insisted on coming to Aleppo; I befriended the girl; I eat crow if anybody does. You can't be allowed to scandalize your folks and ruin your own good rep., Monty old man, not by a darned sight. If any one of us has to toe the line, I'm it!"

"Dashed good of you, Will," said Monty, "but we'll see it through the way we started it—in partnership. As I was saying, my name is our one trump card. I hardly expect to have to play that. Developments are likely to be quick. Don't let's forget that we came to Aleppo with an object."

The rest of us had overlooked that in the excitement of this new turn of events. Even McNamara seemed to have forgotten it in his one all-shadowing desire to flee.

"It's a very good cavalry maxim to bear the objective in mind and keep after it. Many a battle has been won by refusing to swap purposes."

"But, good Lord, Didums!" Fred objected, "we haven't a leg left to stand on. McNamara's spine has turned to water. The woman is a loadstone that'll bring half the cutlery in Aleppo around us in half no time. I'm for action myself, attacking

when the odds look tall and all that kind of thing, but —— it, we can't take all Aleppo by the beard, not we four, and pull till they pay us a million."

"When Achmed McNamara wakes," Monty answered, "I propose to compel him to attend to business. Retreat 'ud be too dangerous. We've got circumstantial proof that some of the governor's men were sent last night to waylay and murder us. Let's accept that as proof that the enemy is rattled and rattle him more yet."

"Aw!" said Will. "You're talking rot now! I'm pretty sure there's a U. S. consul in this place. I'll go and tell him the thing from start to finish. He'll know the best way out."

"How about McNamara's sister?" I objected.

"Aw! You heard Mac himself say she'd be well fixed if Mustapha Kamil makes her his wife."

I laughed at that and Will colored. There was not any need to argue the point or to remind him who was the *Don Quixote* of our party.

"Well—what's to stop you ginks from carrying on with the McNamara business, while I play safe by getting the U. S. consul's ear?"

The fear that had Will by the heart was caused by thinking himself to blame for our predicament, and we knew that. A man more lion-hearted than he in any kind of fight, by day or in the darkness, did not live. But the bravest have hysteria at times and the most unselfish then are likely to have it worst. Hysteria in any of its hydra-headed forms needs scotching swiftly. Monty was the man.

"You may do that over my dead body, Will! If you'd rather back down and run for the coast while the road is open, kindly hold your tongue and give the rest of us a chance!"

"Me? Back down?"

Monty nodded.

"Say, if you hadn't proved yourself a friend of mine twenty times over, I'd punch your head for that!"

"Have a try," laughed Monty.

Then he leaned behind me, tipped up the cot on the end of which Will was sitting, and sent him sprawling on the floor. The schoolboy rough-house that followed—gasps and barks of explosive laughter, yells of impartial encouragement from Fred, upsetting beds and scattering furniture—awoke McNamara and Fatima, in addition to banishing Will's fit of nerves. So the number of councilors grew, McNamara squatting on the floor Turk fashion near Fatima's feet, she appearing older and strangely better looking since she had washed the rouge and powder off, but full of her new beginnings, although the costume hardly indicated that.

"Have you any plans?" Monty asked her.

"Plans? She?" sneered McNamara in his solemn, booming bittern note. "By nine this morning Feyamil, the Turk, will have sold her debts. By ten she will be arrested. By this evening she will be back at her trade in some other place."

Fatima nodded.

"Where would you go if you had your way?" Monty demanded.

"Ah! Europe! Marseilles! Oh!"

"Then you shall. Are you willing to work for your freedom?"

"Anyzing! Everyzing! Yes! You order me! You shall see!"

"You would be paid for your services."

"Ah! No, no! I work free! You are my friends—I charge you nozzing!"

"Enough money to pay off your debts, provide traveling-expenses and leave you with a fair sum over to start life again with."

"Oh! You fool me—yes? You——"

"Never more serious," Monty assured her.

"DIDUMS was playing chess while we slept," said Fred with a wise nod to me.

Will and I were inclined to be scornful of the sedentary game but Fred regarded Monty's folding box of pieces with almost superstitious veneration and always believed their inspiration to Monty was infallible.

"I do anyzing whatever what you order me," vowed Fatima who once was Gabrielle, the daughter of old man Cœur de Chat of the Rue de la Croix de Malte, Marseilles. One could actually feel the stages by which her mind was groping its way back to Europe and new beginnings.

"Very well! Can you write?"

She nodded.

"Compose a letter to Haroun, son of the governor. Write it in French. Tell him you are afraid of us men. Tell him you regret the unfortunate occurrences last night. Suggest to him that you are willing

to be punished—the beast will snap at that bait if he doesn't take the other—if he will only take you to his bosom, or some such piffle. Give her pen and ink, somebody."

"Wait!"

Her own quick wit was swifter than ours to detect what Monty intended and she knew Aleppo inside out, as we did not.

"Zere is a better place as zis. Zis is nowhere. I write—zen 'Aroun is coming 'ere viz ten men and 'e make grreat fight. No, no! 'Ere 'Aroun suspect. I know some place where 'e no suspect."

"Name it!" ordered Monty.

But she could not name it. The intricacies of Aleppo streets lend themselves to no swift directions. She tried for a few minutes, Achmed McNamara booming interruptions that only helped confuse because none of us knew any of the landmarks by which they sketched a course. Then she gave it up.

"I write ze letter. Zen I go. McNamara, 'e come too, to carry ze letter. One of you is wearing Arab dress and coming also. Later zat one come back 'ere and tell where I am. I write ze letter so as 'Aroun come tonight, because 'e will be lying in 'is bed all day groaning on account of 'ow much you strike 'im. If I tell 'im come alone, zat no good, because 'e is suspicious. If I tell 'im bring too many men, 'e think maybe zere will be a bad fight, zen 'e is coward and not come at all. No, no! I tell 'im come viz two—t'ree men to overcome one man. You four can overcome t'ree men—yes?"

"Him and three? I fancy so," said Monty.

McNamara objected sturdily with fifty arguments, first against trusting Fatima, second against putting faith in any plan that included forecast of Haroun's movements, third against sending himself with the letter.

"Blast and shiver it, gentlemen all, they will simply pounce on me and lock me up letter and all. Then they will torture me for information. If you should ever see my poor carcass again, crows and vultures would be picking it."

It seemed about time to deal with McNamara drastically unless we proposed to let him spoil everything, including his own prospects.

"You are to carry that letter," said Monty sternly, "and give it to somebody else to deliver at the door, standing to watch the person who delivers it and bringing back word to me here after you have seen it with your own eyes handed to the porter. If you are not prepared to do that, you shall be thoroughly beaten immediately and then kicked out of doors. Choose!"

"Oh, all right, I will go with it," he answered sulkily.

"Go first, then, and buy Arab clothing for all four of us. Answer no questions, mind, and be quick!"

The cook whom McNamara had procured for us the day before had deserted, suspicious, perhaps, on account of our late hours. I had to go and scratch our breakfast together out of odds and ends of camp provisions and took so much time about it that when I had it all spread on the packing-case table at last they had pegged the plan down pretty fine, Fatima suggesting most of the trickier details, as indeed she had to.

Immediately after breakfast Monty took command again.

"Fred, you're least like an Arab. You stay with me. Will, you're leanest and easiest to disguise. You go with Fatima and bring back word of the hiding-place."

He did not consider sending me because I knew least Arabic of all four and if challenged would have had an impossible task to escape detection.

Very soon after that came Achmed McNamara with a bundle and the news that he believed police spies were watching the house from several vantage-points—a likely enough tale in all conscience, but not to be allowed to frighten us from our purpose, although McNamara trembled in his shoes and vowed noisily that he was mad when he made us his proposal on board ship.

Fatima wrote her letter in none too classic French, in a round, bold hand like a washerwoman's, well adorned with blots.

"It is to punish me ze little beast vill come," she asserted, sealing the envelope under Monty's eye.

Will was dressed very carefully to look like an Arab and schooled in the not-so-easy art of walking like one. Then, in Indian file, McNamara first, then Fatima, indistinguishable in the *yashmak*, then Will, they started out and were nearly knocked down by a pair-horse, mud-splattering carriage with a footman on the box

and a runner in front to whip stray dogs and people out of danger. They dodged under the horses' heads and Will swore lustily in Arabic, spitting and scowling to act the part.

What with the carriage blocking the end of the alley, our *araba* obstructing some of the view, McNamara's obvious native blood and costume and Will's good acting, they managed to get away without being recognized by any one as belonging to our party.

THE NEW arrival by carriage was in no mood to be recognized either. He came hurrying down the alley, jumping and skipping from one dry spot to another between the pools of slime, preceded by the runner, who beat on our gate with the end of his long whip.

I opended to him and admitted, rather to my astonishment, none other than Heinrich von Trottrich Griffenhahn, our new acquaintance of the night before.

"Are you all here?" he asked and started for the house ahead of me without waiting for an answer.

Monty met him at the inner door and stopped his impetuous course by the simple process of not making way for him.

"So you've come?" he said.

"Yes. Let me in and tell me your name now!"

"What have you come for?"

"Not here! We might be overseen from roofs. Who knows who is watching! Let me in!"

Monty stood aside when it suited him and not before, smiling with amusement that appeared rather to unstiffen the German's air of importance.

"I suppose you realize what a mess you're in?" he suggested, after a swift glance at everything in the common room. We had not much to look at, but what we did have was such as no fly-by-nights would travel with—expensive guns, expensive camping-gear. "This is not all of you. Where are the others?"

"Don't make so much noise," said Monty. "Shut that bedroom door, Fred!"

The inference was that Fatima, at any rate, was sleeping. The German might draw any other conclusions he liked.

"Oh, well—" He shrugged titanic shoulders and smiled immoral tolerance as he took the seat I offered him. "I'll be brief. You're in an awful fix. I heard the whole story while I was shaving and came to see you at once. Let me tell you that however well the whipping you gave Haroun was deserved, it was very unwise. His father idolizes him. The little wretch can practically have his own way in Aleppo. He is more toadied to than the governor himself, for the simple reason that the governor gives him anything he wants and he sells in turn to the highest bidder—concessions—court decisions—anything."

"What has all this to do with you and me?" asked Monty calmly and the German laughed.

"I see you are not easily disturbed. Well, this is an occasion when you can afford to forget *sang-froid*. You are in very serious danger."

"As you remarked once before, I believe."

"Haroun is certain to demand revenge. As soon as he gets out of bed he is quite sure to go to his father and insist on your arrest. You are likely to be bastinadoed first and tried afterward, should you survive the operation. There is only one way of forestalling him that I can see."

"I'm listening."

Monty took out his cigaret case and helped himself. I wondered at his not offering it to the German first; yet I noticed that Fred did not remedy the oversight, although he was watching with wide-awake eyes and missing nothing. Yet hospitality had always seemed Monty's first rule.

"Haroun is a peculiar scoundrel. He has strange obsessions. His latest has been that girl Fatima. He could simply reach out and take her at any time, of course, but it has amused him to act the part of fisherman and angle leisurely. I know him so well that I would stake my reputation on the statement that, until the next bait tantalizes him, Fatima is his one supreme desire."

"And you propose?"

"That you hand the girl over to me. I am told you have her here."

Monty's face did not change. He lit the cigaret and eyed the glowing end of it with a sort of thoughtful interest.

"I am quite sure that if I went to him and said I have that girl in my possession, I could persuade him to overlook even the whipping you gave him last night. I would bargain *quid pro quo*."

Monty flicked off the first quarter-inch

of ash. Fred began to grow a little restless.

"And what do you get out of this?" asked Monty, looking at the ground for a moment and then quite suddenly into the German's eyes.

"Nothing!"

Still Monty's face did not change. He blew three smoke rings.

"For a man who expects to get nothing, you are almost in a hurry, aren't you?"

"What the —— do you mean?"

"Even in Germany, do—ah—men of some social position propose to—ah—use an unfortunate woman's living body for purposes of barter unless they expect to get something out of it?"

The German's eyes changed and glittered. He did not seem exactly to let a mask fall, but his features hardened.

"I am not a suitable person to insult," he said coldly.

"I take it you came to talk business," said Monty and I noticed Fred get ready for anything at all in the way of violence.

Heinrich von Trottrich Griffenhahn had lost his grip on the situation. Fully expecting to find us at our wits'-end and as anxious to clutch straws as the proverbial drowning man, he was made nervous by the surprizing discovery that Monty could see through him. He was obviously inclined by instinct to bluster and bully his way out of the situation, yet afraid to do that for fear of meeting more than his match and being sent away empty-handed. And the more he hesitated to use his natural methods, the more sure Monty knew that he had found the key to our problem.

"Come," said Monty, crossing his knees and knocking off more ash. "There is something you want to get out of Haroun. What is it?"

The German's lips grew hard, and he pressed his wrists down firmly on the chair-arms.

"Why should I tell you?"

"Because," said Monty, "without my help you won't get what you're after."

"If you can tell me what I am after, then I will lay my cards on the table and admit you into partnership."

"I have sufficient partners," Monty answered and to judge by his leisurely air of enjoying the cigaret nobody could have guessed his intention of risking all our prospects on a dozen words and their probable effect. "You are after a certain piece of land for the Bagdad Railway. You know it's going to slip out of your grasp if Mustapha Kamil Bey ever marries the Armenian woman in the governor's harem. Mustapha Kamil would make you pay through the nose for it. You came here hoping to get possession of Fatima in order to bribe Haroun to persuade his father to find some way of conveying the woman's property to you. Isn't that so?"

"How did you know?"

"Never mind. How much will you pay me for the property?"

"I can not say off hand."

"Oh, if you're not interested I beg pardon. It'll be quite easy to sell elsewhere."

"It's not worth much."

"How much?"

"Ten thousand pounds, Turkish."

"IT'S worth much more than ten times that sum to me," said Monty casually. "Let us understand each other. I know quite well you want it. I know who else wants it. I have no particular desire to sell to you, but I shall sell to somebody before this time tomorrow. I am giving you first offer because you happen to be here and, unless you care to make me what I consider a reasonable bid, this is the last chance you will get."

"Ridiculous!" sneered the German. "Prove to me that you own the property or can control the sale of it. You can't!"

"If you don't believe me, you have only to walk out and close the door behind you," answered Monty, reaching for another cigaret.

I knew that the superhuman calmness was as a glove he had drawn on, but the German could not be expected to know that.

"Why should I believe you? You have not told me your name yet."

"The omission was intentional."

"Are you ashamed of your name?"

"Merely ashamed to bandy it in certain circles."

"I don't believe a word you say!"

"Good morning, then. Show him out, Fred!"

Fred was on his feet in a moment and he did not look like a man to be lightly defied, for all the German's weight and obvious muscularity.

"This way!" he said.

The German shrugged shoulders and turned to go. He was half-way to the door when he faced about suddenly.

"You refer, of course, to the Hamidieh property?"

That was an obvious trap. With a sudden tingle of goose-flesh I realized that Achmed McNamara had never once mentioned to us the name of the property, supposing that it had a name. He had described it often enough.

"I refer to the single piece of land that the promoters of the Bagdad Railway need in order to complete their right of way through Aleppo."

"If I offer you a quarter of a million pounds Turkish for it, what proof do you offer that you can deliver the title?"

"Make the offer in writing and sign it," Monty answered.

"Then what?"

"Make it and see!"

"Bah! A common baazar trick! You hope to show my written offer in order to get a higher price from somebody else."

"Good morning," answered Monty. "Show him out, Fred!"

Once more the German turned to go. Again he paused before he reached the door and faced about.

"If I had any reason for believing your bare word was worth listening to, I'd write you that offer," he said.

"Too bad," said Monty, striking a match with an air of such utter boredom that the German was convinced against his will of one thing: we were at least in no hurry and not over-anxious to make terms.

"Tell me your name."

Monty shook his head.

"You might tell other people. That would be disagreeable."

The German looked keenly again at every one of our cases and trunks—at the guns on the wall—then at me—then at Fred—then at Monty.

"Somewhere I have seen you once before," he said, searching his memory for time and place. "Not these others, but you—yes, you!"

He shrugged his shoulders again, this time with the air of a man who bets at random.

"All right! You are obviously of the class that plays cricket, as you English say. I will write my offer of a quarter of a million pounds, Turkish, for that property, sign it and leave it with you, provided you tell me your name in return. And as long as you keep my offer to yourself I shall not mention your name to any one."

Monty smiled.

"How long is that agreement to last?" he asked.

"For a month, if you like. I am not a talker. It is likely I should never tell it. I only want to know for the sake of convincing myself you are no common adventurer."

"Write your offer," said Monty. "Then write another note giving me your word of honor not to disclose my name in connection with this business. In case of your breaking your word I would use that document against you."

"All right!"

The German came back and sat down at our table. I passed him paper. He wrote two separate notes, signed them, waved them in the air to dry and passed them both to Monty. Monty read them carefully, folded them up and passed his own card to Griffenhahn. The German whistled.

"I don't believe you!"

Monty felt in an inner pocket and produced his passport, signed by the Prime Minister of England and viséd by so many notables that it would be worth a good round sum to the hunters of autographs.

"So that's it, eh? *Kreutz blitzen!* Fooled, am I? So the English Foreign Office was not so fast asleep as I supposed."

"You're mistaken," Monty answered. "Our Foreign Office has nothing to do with this whatever."

"Oh, no, no! Of course not! Nevertheless—as between ourselves—tell me—oh, I see!" He whistled again. "Do you suppose your government will thank you for this? Of course, they wouldn't like to see a man of your standing in a Turkish jail, with all the ensuing publicity, but—well—that's your affair. It's understood I say nothing provided you take up my offer within——"

"Twenty-four hours," said Monty.

"I shall expect the title deeds properly transferred by the Turkish authorities."

"You can attend to the transfer yourself. Have the money ready to bring to me——"

"Here?"

"To whatever place I shall name by messenger, at whatever hour I send for you. What cities do you draw on?"

"Berlin."

"Won't do."

"Vienna."

"No good at all."

"Paris—London."

"Either of those. Say a draft on Paris, then, for the equivalent of two hundred thousand pounds, Turkish, at the daily rate of exchange—then a draft on Alexandria or Cairo for fifteen thousand and another for ten thousand on the same place."

"Payable to you?"

"No, to bearer."

"Very well. I hope you will live up to your part of the contract, Lord——"

"No names, please."

"All right! But understand me! If you don't toe the mark and deliver that title to me tomorrow I shall let the cat out of the bag. Until this time tomorrow I shall use my influence to save you from arrest for last night's foolishness. After this time tomorrow, let us hope you will have earned the right to my continued services."

FRED shook his fist as the house door slammed after the man's athletic back. Monty laughed silently and then aloud when the outer gate slammed too.

"Observe the workings of the cultivated German mind," he said. "I'll pay any one a thousand pounds for proof that he has convinced that man that I'm not betraying our Foreign Office. He imagines now he is blackmailing me. He'll probably try to blackmail me afterward. Do you see his point? He supposes I'm a Foreign Office agent, sent to spoil the German Bagdad Railway plans. He jumps to the conclusion that I've succeeded, but that I'm willing to sell the prize to him in order to get out of our last night's scrape. My stipulation for three drafts for odd amounts probably confirmed his judgment in some cross-grained way. Perhaps he thinks I'm planning to return the government's money by the way it came—or perhaps he thinks I'm stealing it."

"But is our government trying to spoil the German Bagdad Railway plans?" I asked.

"Not in any underhanded way," he answered. "I've been told of negotiations and diplomatic *pourparlers*, but you may be quite sure there's no plotting of the kind he suspects. We don't use the German method, I'm glad to be able to say."

We sat for a long while after that, waiting for Will to return with news of Fatima's hiding place and for McNamara to bring word of the safe delivery of the letter. At noon I scraped up an indifferent luncheon, and it was not until after we had eaten that, that we became at all nervous. We ceased talking—ceased smoking; Fred ceased fingering the concertina keys; Monty closed the chess-box with a frown. There was neither sign nor sound of them, nor a way that we could think of by which to discover their whereabouts.

By two in the afternoon we had begun to blame ourselves savagely for letting Will go off on such a dangerous venture alone.

"Letting him!," grumbled Fred. "We made him do it. I'll never forgive the three of us if harm has come to that boy. America is the only one of us with genuine idealism. We're three wizened, worldly-wise men. Will is a boy out of a book."

We each had our individual way of liking Will but none had ever guessed before how much we liked him. The thought that we might have sent him to his death in that old city of assassins made silence unbearable. Yet there was nothing whatever to say. We scarcely gave a thought to McNamara or to Griffenhahn, who would have to wait in vain for title deeds. Once or twice we did think of Fatima, but without consolation.

"We should never have trusted that woman," said Fred, and Monty and I both nodded.

"I can't sit still here any longer," I said at last. "Let's do something—anything!"

Monty looked at his watch.

"I'll go to the consul, show my papers and claim official protection for Will," he said.

"I'll go with you."

"So will I."

"One of us ought to stay here."

But nobody would agree to stay. We filed out into the courtyard and locked the house door behind us.

"What's that?" demanded Monty suddenly. "It sounds like some one at the outer door. Listen! Might have been making that noise for an hour—we'd never have heard it. Open the gate gingerly, Fred—be careful now!"

Fred tried to look through the keyhole first but failed, so he pulled the squeaking

spring-latch back and opened the narrow gate by inches. Then suddenly he threw it wide, admitted a bundle of dark-brown rags and slammed it shut again.

She was about the most frightened little female I ever saw, who unwrapped the dirty covering from her shaven head and disclosed two jewel-bright brown eyes. She covered her face again instantly, as if virtue at her age and the sight of three grown men were things incompatible. She could not have been more than ten years old and the little, thin fingers with which she held the rags over herself trembled with terror. Apparently she knew no English—French—Arabic or any language we could speak.

At the end of two or three minutes of seductive questioning by Fred, our champion linguist, she suddenly seemed to remember her mission and produced from somewhere underneath her clothing a folded, soiled envelope. It bore no address.

"How did she find us, I wonder?"

Monty led the way back into the house and we brought the terrified messenger between us, she as fearful of us as we were that she might slip between our hands and cut and run.

We followed Monty in, locked the door to prevent the child from giving us the slip and stood twitching with excitement, watching Monty open the envelope. He did it with the dilatory, deliberate patience of a man who will not let himself betray his galloping nerves, examining every corner of the envelope and holding it up to the light before inserting his little finger and tearing cautiously.

Inside was a scrawl in French on half a sheet of ruled exercise paper in Fatima's bold hand, adorned with a hundred blots and signed with only one initial.

"After dark this little one will lead you to my place," it ran, roughly translated. "Your fat dragoman is no good. He delivered the letter. They arrested him. He squealed. Inside ten minutes they had come and seized Will—" She did not know any but the first names by which we addressed one another—"I do not know where they have put Will, but my confidante sends word they have beaten the dragoman to make him talk. Do not move before dark, and then come disguised. F."

For one long minute we were silent. Then we swore in unison.

"If they arrested Will at her place, what's the use of our going there to be pounced on, too?" demanded Fred.

"Question is," said I, "is it wise, or not, for you to find a consul and demand help?"

Monty did not answer. He tried instead with a hundred wiles and smiles—with bribes of small change, candy, fruit—then with stern firmness—to persuade the small messenger to talk.

"Is Fatima at the same place or has she gone to another place?" he asked in five languages in succession.

But the ridiculous mite merely nodded. She did not cry at his sterner tactics, being presumably used to severity in far worse forms than any of us would dream of using, but retired into her brown shell turtle fashion, the rags coming over her head again.

"Feed her!" said Monty at last with a sigh that admitted failure.

SO I took the little creature by the arm and introduced her to our stock of camp provisions. Biscuits out of a tin and jam and raisins seemed to comprise her notion of heaven, but talk even then she would not, although she had a tongue, for she stuck it in the jam-pot.

When I pulled her away from the feast for fear she might burst, Monty and Fred were still in deep conclave. Fred was for seeking out a consul at once and demanding to know what had become of Will. Nobody cared a continental about poor McNamara.

"The letter doesn't say he was arrested; it says seized," he insisted. "If he were simply arrested, I'd say all right, let him lie among the lice a while until we work our scheme; the jail's accessible. But seized may mean that he's being tortured or garroted now. Maybe he's dead."

"If the poor chap is," said Monty, "we can't help him. I say let us stick to the objective. Carry on! I know a little of the East. The motive underlying everything a Turk does is fear. He eats for fear of starving. He locks his women up for fear of other men. If they have seized Will for sake of revenge, they will do nothing to him yet for fear of us. They'll wait to get the rest of us before they dare apply torture or kill. I don't believe Haroun has told his father or any other official, of the seizure of Will, or even of McNamara, for fear political reasons might induce them to interfere—as they almost certainly

would. He expects to catch one of us tonight and he'll go on that expedition himself for fear Fatima might give him the slip after all. But it's my belief he'll send more of his men down here to seize the other two simultaneously for fear the other two might go in search of number one and raise ructions. Let's leave lights burning on the upper floor, so that they'll show through the slits of windows from the road, and go with this little messenger the minute it gets dark."

We argued it out, Fred sticking to his plea that "the only thing a decent chap could do" was to throw our own plans to the wind and invoke the full force of ex-territorial consular jurisdiction. Finally we put it to a vote and I took Monty's side, reasoning that if the worst had happened to Will, it had happened already and that Fatima had likely enough taken thought before she wrote to us what to do.

So Fred went up-stairs to see about the lights and, what with arranging a draft to keep the naked flame of several candles dancing—cutting the silhouette of a man's face out of wood and balancing it with a paper sail so that every stronger gust would move it—and arranging a steady drip from a bucket of water into a small tin can, so that one of the candles would move several feet along a board and perhaps be upset and be extinguished—he contrived a very fair after-dark appearance of occupancy for spies to watch.

Monty and I, meanwhile, explored for some other means of exit than the front gate. To climb walls or run along roofs would have been too risky. But we found out that our courtyard adjoined another one and, although the house next door was occupied, we preferred the chance of outraging a neighbor and being mistaken for burglars to the prospect of being followed all through the streets by Haroun's spies. So we got out our little prospecting picks and cut away the thick dividing-wall of sun-dried bricks until nothing was left in one place but a film a man could kick through with his foot. After that we all got into our Arab dress and bewailed the shaving-glass, too small to let us see how nice we looked.

Then we sat down again to wait for darkness; and of all the interminable, miserable watches we three ever spent together that one was the worst. Twenty times our whole plan appeared sheer craziness. Ten times, at least, we began to talk of changing it and were only prevented from undermining our tottering courage in that way by Monty's vigorous bad language.

"Better make mistakes—go ahead and make 'em," he said, "than change a plan at the eleventh hour. The enemy 'll make mistakes too. Everybody makes 'em. The one safe way is to have an objective and stick to it through thick and thin."

"—— it! We ought to have gone to the consul!" grumbled Fred.

"Well and good!" said Monty. "But we decided not to. If we had gone we'd have saved our own bacon but not our reputations. And we'd have left McNamara and his sister in the lurch!"

"—— McNamara!"

"Very well, —— him! But don't let vacillation —— us!"

SO THE time passed and darkness at last put an end to conversation that toward the end was growing too polite for friendship and maddening because useless in any case. Fred went up-stairs and set his deceptive lights to work. Monty and I kicked a hole through the courtyard wall and, because we had previously thinned the earthen bricks, very little dry dirt fell on the far side and there was almost no noise. Inspection showed that the family was indoors. Gloaming and the blackness of long shadows favored us, helped out by Turkish theories on dogs that precluded any chained friend of man to bark alarm.

So we crossed the courtyard, one at a time, Monty leading the child by the hand and each of us hugely comforted by the dead weight of a loaded repeating pistol and the heft of a thick stick in his hand. The door in the wall leading out of the courtyard was locked and the key nowhere to be seen, but Fred worked swiftly with clasp-knife and trembling fingers and unscrewed the iron casing of the lock. After that it was a second's work to lift the tumbler and slide the bolt back.

Our guide seemed lost for a minute, inclined to head first up-street and then down. Then, with the gamin bump of locality that is the heritage of poverty in crowded streets, she turned definitely up-street and led the way without once again hesitating.

She did not take us at all the way we had gone under McNamara's leadership the night before. She led us instead toward the great bazaar—so great that it dwarfs the notorious, enormous one of Stamboul. Bagdad is a small affair compared to it. Through everlasting, winding, narrow streets she hurried so fast that we were troubled to keep pace, the dogs snarling and yapping at us strangers but ignoring her.

We had only one lantern with us. She carried it, reckless of the light reflected in the green eyes of a dozen dogs or of the fangs bared within three feet of it. Yet she had feared us three who had not between us as much as one tendency to harm a child of her age. And we feared those clattering fangs worse than the devil.

Who shall tell of Aleppo Bazaar who plunges into it by night in the wake of a hurrying girl-guide so small that any shadow could swallow and lose her? Monty kept hold of her, but a false step, a stumble or a jerk would have ripped the rotten garment in his fingers. If she had not feared retribution more than she did us, she could have lost us in a minute.

We hurried under echoing stone roofs, past countless dark side-passages where trades as old as man's dispersal made night clamorous—they know no labor laws where the Turkish code has sway. The beasts of burden seemed to recognize a law of day and night; some we saw stalled in the dark side-alleys and one sleeping camel blocked the main thoroughfare we hurried down, so that we had to climb over him, at risk of his waking suddenly and rising in a panic.

Each quarter to a trade and there were a thousand quarters. Each passage to a branch of a trade appeared to be the rule. Each owner of a stall his own provider of dim light or shuddery dark. Candles, naked or sheathed in cheap imported glass, candles in twenty-colored globes, oil lamps, oil-flares, patent acetylene lights that threw a corpsy whiteness over half an alley, saucers of vegetable oil of a make and smell more ancient than the tongues of men who bargained in among them—all these gave a little light and illustrated darkness.

The smells of all the ancient trades greeted us, blended with the next and passed. Stinks announced that corruption underlay and overlay the whole bazaar—trade, methods, morals, merchandise—we could see the rats that ate the heart out of the best, leaving the rinds for less picksome plunderers, and other creatures more evil than rats.

Once and again there came out of the dark the friendly, raw smell of carpets. Those seemed the wealthier, safer streets where most of the shutters were up by night and the men who lingered spoke in quieter tones and wore clean garments. But next-neighbor to a mart that drew its wares from all the honest East would be a cheap-jack alley again, with snatches of obscene song lifting where the pipe-smoke curled around tin hurricane lights.

Not once did our small guide hesitate. She did not once fear to turn down a reeking dark alley or take a short cut under echoing tunnels. Darkness, lurking humans, shadows that shook with unimaginable evil—nothing frightened her except our company and Monty's grip on her dirty, decaying garment. Stalking in the guise of Arabs where Arabs caused no more comment than the smells, we sweated with fear at every black lurking-place, maintaining dignity and self-command only by act of will. Safe as any of the rats that knew each hole and corner, she feared only the three men who would have fought for their honor's sake rather than see her struck.

We came at last to a passage under stone vaults, a little less smelly and a little more illuminated than most of the rest had been. She turned and hurried down it, we close after her, past open doors where women sat with their veils not arranged with that complete dishonor of man's eye that the Moslem code decrees. There was music of the Turkish sort that is neither harmony nor melody, within those precincts.

Then we turned sharp to the left down a tunnel, past a coffee-shop where men of a dozen nations sat on rugs that had seen a hundred skies and entered a door half-way down the tunnel on the right-hand side, that strangely opened before one of us touched it and shut again behind us with a slam and the click of a spring lock.

WE STOOD in a long, narrow stone passage with four oil lamps burning at intervals on brackets along the wall. At the end, in the middle of another door, stood Fatima, arrayed in such

gorgeous tinsel-and-muslin finery as surely was never before seen out of fairy-tales, holding a lamp over her head and laughing with the glee of brewing deviltry.

"My little Josephine, she bring you nicely, yes? No, 'er name is not Josephine, but I call her so because of old times. You gave 'er to eat, yes? Zen she go right away now to my ozzer place where zey come and seize Will. Zat pig 'Aroun will be zere soon. She must take 'im by ze 'and and show 'im ze vay 'ere. Go, Josephine—go, *cherie—vite!*—vairee qvick!"

Apparently not in the least tired, the wordless guide wrapped her minute self more carefully in the ragged cloth and departed through the door we had come in by, Fatima jerking at a cord to draw the latch. We walked into a room furnished with mats and cushions and one half-couch. There were mats on the walls as well as floor, producing an effect of smothering warmth and silence. Fatima laughed and drew a mat back, disclosing a door in the wall, close beside the doorway she was standing in when we first entered from the street.

"Zat is vhere you vait for 'im," she laughed.

But we were in no mood to joke about prospects until we had heard all she knew about Will.

"McNamara, 'e is no good," she announced with a shake of the head in answer to the questions we all three fired at her at once.

"But Will—what about Will?"

"'E is vairee good!"

Evidently she proposed to tell us in her own way and not be hurried. We sat down on the three-thick carpets and pretended we were calm. She produced cigarets and we helped ourselves, she with sparkling eyes contributing to the game of make-believe, pretending she thought us what we tried to seem.

Whether or not her father, Cœur de Chat of the Rue de la Croix de Malte, had sold her to the Moor as McNamara said he did, the reason of her undoing had been appetite for lawless intrigue. If any one was in danger now, surely she was—if not of life, then of being seized for debt and dragged into worse slavery than we had snatched her from. Yet she was dressed for a wedding and sipping lazily at the danger as if it were wine in a glass.

"Will, 'e walk wiz me," she continued in her own good time, talking over her shoulder to us as she prepared coffee at a little brazier, "an' McNamara, 'e come along too. McNamara by-and-by is afraid—not willing to take ze letter. Will, 'e go along and make 'im, kicking 'im be'ind in ze street as no Arab kick anozzer man, making me laugh so. Presently I follow zem both because no one in street is knowing me through ze *yashmak*. I want to see. Zey go to 'Aroun's palace. McNamara is thump on ze door, and a eunuch open. McNamara is so afraid zat ze eunuch, 'e suspect 'im—give a shout—t'ree ozzer men come—zey all seize McNamara and pull 'im inside.

"Zey shut ze door. Will, 'e is much disturb'. 'E walk up an' down outside, like no Arab ever be'ave. Vairee bad. Me, I go close an' tell 'im make different be'avior. Veree crosslee 'e tell me go to ——. I go away—no use woman in *yashmak* standing arguing with Arab in Aleppo street—I go away quick. Presently ze door is opening again and same t'ree men come running out. Will 'e walk up cool as cucumber, maybe to ask zem where is McNamara. Zey seize 'im quick. Will, 'e fight vairee good, same as a lion. 'E tear all zeir clothes off and knock 'em down two—t'ree time. Zen two more men come out and all zey five carry 'im in and shut ze door. Zen I find my frien', and she make inquiry by back door to ze 'areem. Afterward I write you zat leetle letter and send it by Josephine."

"Have you any more news of Will?" we all demanded.

She clapped her hands. Another mat swung on the wall and a good-looking Gipsy type of woman, with the world-over Gipsy swing from the hips, came out of an unexpected door to take the cups away.

"She is taking message by-an'-by," she announced. "She is vairee dependable as long as you pay good. You pay 'er first, zen she take message."

"All right! Tell us about Will."

"My frien', she go to 'Aroun's 'areem to manicure ze ladies' 'ands and she learn everyzing. McNamara is telling all 'e know because zey whip 'im on ze feet, but not very bad because 'e is telling all before zey can 'it 'im often. Will is lock up in dark room in cellar. By-and-by 'Aroun's men are going to your 'ouse to kill two of

you zere. Also 'Aroun is coming to see me because of zat letter I sent 'im, and after 'e is finding me and killing ze ozzer one of you, zen 'e is no longer afraid to go back and torture Will. 'E is going to torture him zen like ze devil. Maybe 'e torture me too. So it is good if you t'ree men are not letting 'Aroun escape. 'E is going first to ze place where 'is spy saw Will and McNamara take me. Zen Josephine she find 'im and bring 'im 'ere. Only, if 'e 'ave more zan t'ree man wiz 'im, Josephine will come back alone."

"Um-m-m!" remarked Monty. "I'm not what you'd call keen on doing murder, but if Haroun comes to this place he'll not escape alive without my leave."

Fatima nodded.

"Now you go and 'ide!" she ordered, drawing the mat to one side and pushing us through. "I will tidy ze room so 'Aroun may not suspect. Leave zat door open, only let ze mat 'ang down. Soon as zey come t'rough ze ozzer door, use pistol — stick — anyzing. Only be vairee qvick!"

We took her advice about the door, because the mat hung down copiously over the opening. There was just room for the three of us to stand together in the passageway, in pitch darkness in which we could hear one another's heart-beats. Monty's fingers, clenching and unclenching on the stick he held, irritated me to the verge of unendurance. Fred, breathing in time to an imaginary tune, picked at the catch of the concertina slung, as ever, about his shoulder, until I could have brained him with the thing.

VI

I COUNTED pulse-beats — then breaths—then took out my watch and tried to keep tale of seconds. Then I whispered—

"How long have we waited?"

Fred and Monty answered raucously with one voice—

"Shut up, you idiot!"

They made ten times as much noise answering as I did with the harmless question. Fatima drew the mat back and held a warning finger to her lips.

"There, what did I tell you, you ass!" hissed Fred.

We had gone from the stage of having nerves on end to the deadly dangerous point of numbness, when a sound of distant thumping—one two, then one two three, repeated three times, warned us of Haroun's approach. Evidently that signal had been agreed on with Josephine to mean that not too many armed followers accompanied the governor's son, for we distinctly heard Fatima jerk the cord to admit them.

Instantly loud Turkish voices filled the passage, and we heard Josephine begging for silence.

"She's telling 'em you are asleep—that's you, Didums, you profligate," whispered Fred.

After that they came tiptoeing down the passage—in single file we knew, because of the narrowness. Fatima, bowing to admit them, backed against the mat that blocked our view, we cursing her in silence for spoiling whatever prospect we might have had of taking Haroun by surprize. But she judged her maneuver by what she could see, not by what we thought in the dark was wisest. It transpired that Haroun sent his two men ahead of him, with knives in their hands, to do any necessary killing; it was not until they had reported all clear and Haroun himself had ventured gingerly into the room that she shut the door firmly enough to signal us, stepping away at the same time from the hanging mat and pulling it down with a jerk.

So surprize was the essence of the business after all. The two men were stout rascals, one a Greek and the other an Arab. Fred and I beat their knives down with our sticks, since they showed fight, and the hanging mats smothered any yell they made. After that, when we leveled pistols at them, they capitulated readily enough.

Haroun, having had a taste of Monty's whip the night before, still smarting from it, sore to the touch in a hundred places and no brave man at the best of times, slunk away from his first onslaught and cowered with hands over his head, begging for mercy.

Fred got carefully between our captives and the tiny table in the middle of the room and laughed aloud.

"Won't you share the joke?" said I, but Monty had seen it already and laughed with him.

"The only lighted lamp is this on the table behind me," he answered. "One

kick and any one of the three could have turned the odds against us. Lucky the fools didn't think of it, or bigger fools would have lost tonight's game."

At Fatima's call the Gipsy woman came out from under a hanging mat with coils on coils of good hemp rope and the other two watched while I put into use a little of the lore I learned at sea, trussing all three captives so that no ingenuity or restlessness of theirs could have freed them as long as the rope should hold together. Haroun yelled at the bite of the cord on his well-whipped muscles, but the condition of his flesh was his affair; he who goes adventuring in Aleppo tunnels after dark should go in training.

When all three were bound, we gagged them, giving them wads of folded cloth to bite on. Then we laid the two hired bullies in the dark place that had hidden us and hung up the mat in its place. Haroun we left for the present on his back in the midst of the room, having use for him.

"Did he only bring two men?" I asked.

"T'ree," said Fatima.

"The other?"

"Zey left 'im outside to keep a guard."

"How do you know?"

"I heard 'Aroun give ze order. 'E is to stay zere. If 'e 'ear shouts 'e is to come in but 'e is not to let ozzers enter."

"What shall we do? Go out and lasso him? He'll likely see us first, run and give the alarm," said I.

But disposal of the third man was easy, it happened, without such clumsy means as pursuit and a thrown noose, which no doubt would have brought the whole warren of night-prowlers down on us.

"*Vous êtes fou!*" snorted Fatima. "I send ze jipsee. She show ze teeth at 'im. Zat one outside is Mahmoud—a fat fool who always stays outside 'ouses to mind shoes and makes love to ze shadow of everee ole woman in a *yashmak*."

So we concealed ourselves again, and the Gipsy went out to open the door and say that Haroun the worshipful needed his faithful servant Mahmoud. There followed a question or two that we could hear—a deep base voice and an impudent answer. A moment later the door slammed shut and a heavy footfall pursued a light one. There was a stifled scream and a struggle, for the Turkish servant is no light-handed dallier in the toils of love; the Gipsy burst into the room, followed by Mahmoud at soberer gait, trying to seem unconnected with the disturbance.

He stood for a second to gaze in the doorway and we realized at once we had made a mistake in not hiding Haroun out of his sight. With a bellow of mingled fear and fury he started back down the passage to escape.

I was first after him. I caught him by the neck. He tossed me forward over his shoulders with the strength of a bull and the skill of the public porter he once had been, hurling me against the door at the end with almost force enough to burst it open. Perhaps that was his intention. At any rate, I fell, half-stunned, across the doorway, and while he wrenched at the latch and kicked at me in Berserker rage Fred came up. Fred used a stick to begin with—more, as he said afterward, for the sake of saving my ribs than because he thought himself and Monty unequal to the task.

But even when he had hit the man a blow on the pate that would have cracked an ostrich-egg Mahmoud put up a ten-times better fight than the others had all together. He turned and drew a knife and when they knocked that out of his hand he fought like a bear with his fists and feet, bellowing and charging.

We were all three the worse for wear when we had him trussed at last. Even then, like a newly caged panther that tests each separate bar, he strained at the cords until they cut him. After we had him gagged, he lay with flaming eyes and jaws that worked tirelessly to chew the cloth wad into pulp, so that he might swallow it and use his teeth on the lashings. We respected Mahmoud—regretted the pain he obliged us to inflict on him. Ten of his master rolled into one would not have made half of him.

But we had him safe at last and stowed him away in a dark, locked hole at the far end of a tunnel at the back of Fatima's strange quarters, to make assurance doubly sure. Rooms and passages with long, octopus arms reached out for more than fifty yards toward the rear into the heart of Aleppo Bazaar, none of them having any other access to a street than the one narrow door through which we had all entered that evening. It was simply a disused storehouse, planned for use in a city in

which law and order is an unknown luxury, and plunder by force of arms has been yesterday's story and tomorrow's prospect for fifteen hundred years. Fatima did not tell us how it came to be unoccupied or how she had acquired possession. Probably the Gipsy could have answered that question better than she.

OUR first idea after we had rubbed the hurts Mahmoud gave us was to write a letter to the governor and send it by the hand of the Gipsy. But Fatima, whose stake was as great as ours, claimed the right to advise.

"Zat Mahmoud is beating out all your wits, eh?" she sneered. "You write a letter, eh? What say ze governor? 'E say 'Fetch ze English consul; he and I go and see zis affaire togezzer.' English consul, 'e come 'ere, and what you say zen? What you do zen? No, no, no!"

There was no denying her contention. Should the governor appeal to the British or the American consul, or to both of them, we should almost certainly bring about Will's release forthwith, but McNamara, being a Turkish subject, would remain in durance vile and his sister in condition even viler. After which we should have explanations to make to the consuls, who had ex-territorial jurisdiction and would want to know what we meant by taking the law into our hands.

"Zat miserable 'Aroun, 'e shall write ze letter to 'is papa!"

Monty set his teeth. The part of the business he fancied least would be the dirty work of making Haroun obey orders. But Fatima was used to dirty work and no shirker at all.

"You loose 'is one 'and. Zen you sit over zere and let me manage."

So we unbound his right hand as she directed, she summoning the Gipsy to chafe it where the cord had numbed the wrist. Then we sat in a row on mats against the wall and watched while she worked on his fear and made him do her will.

The little brazier at which she had made our coffee was her unanswerable argument. She had tongs with which to select the choicest morsels of cherry-red charcoal and the mere mention of applying those to the more tender parts of his soft anatomy, blanched his face white. Monty had told less than the truth when he said a Turk's motives are based on fear; Haroun's were nothing but fear.

She was not unwise enough to tell him that we three would apply the torture unless he obeyed her will, for the Turks know the English. But she told him we had passed our word not to interfere with her; and the worse liar a Turk is, the more respect he has for the word of an Englishman.

Then she ordered him to take pen and ink and write to his father that he was a prisoner; that he was held to ransom; that his ransom could only be effected by his father in person; that unless his father and not more than two attendants should come with the guide at once, he—Haroun—would be burned about the right foot and the right foot sent to papa for evidence of good faith on the captors' part. Moreover, that if papa should try any tricks, such as ordering a body of men to follow him, or should attempt anything except exact compliance with the spirit of the summons, torture would begin forthwith and death would put an end to any possibility of rescue. Torture, she made him add by way of footnote, was to commence in any case one hour before midnight unless papa should have put in an appearance before that time.

Haroun wrote it all out in Turkish and the paper was passed to Fred for consideration. He ordered it written out again, with the wording changed in places, and watched the process of rewriting and the signature with hawk eyes for tricks. Not that Haroun was the type of individual likely to be proficient in cryptic writing at high speed, but the risk was too grave for taking chances even with that spoiled product of Turkish rule. Finally Fred ordered sealing-wax and insisted on Haroun sealing the letter with his thumb-mark. The man's intense distaste for that task was sufficient proof in itself that his father would be likely to regard the thumb-mark as evidence conclusive.

"Without that the old card might try tricks," Fred grinned. "But these strange folk have a fatal regard for the personal touch. There's no logic in it, but there's very little logic in anything under the stars. The governor will recognize that thumb-print and come with two attendants as required."

Monty nodded. Between them those

two were more than a match for the Eastern mind. What one did not know, the other did, intuition piecing out the blanks.

"Who shall take the letter?"

Fatima had considered that problem beforehand in all its bearings. She was the only one who was to sit idle in that room; the rest of us were to go to work at once. The Gipsy brought out Josephine from the inner room and they two went off with the letter, hand-in-hand.

"Josephine, she is to deliver it. Anybody know it is no use to ask her questions. Zat child 'as more silence as appetite. Josephine, she deliver it and say nozzing. Zat woman—" she never once mentioned her name, perhaps for fear lest we might grow familiar and transfer our regards—"shall watch Josephine from long way off. One of you watch zat woman from long way off—anozzer one watch 'im—ze ozzer one watch ze second one. Zen, when Josephine is coming out, zat woman run and tell 'ow many men come and all about it. Ze man what watch 'er, 'e run—zen ze second man, 'e run—zen ze third man run and tell me. And all t'ree men and ze woman is getting back 'ere long before ze governor, because ze governor is 'ave to walk with Josephine and she come slow on purpose.

"If everyzing is olright, Josephine she shall not fall down; but if Josephine fall down and get up again, zen zat woman is making signal so and everybody know it is no good and we all make —— quick escape. But it will be all right and Josephine shall not fall down. You wait and see!"

The plan was simple enough, and as holeproof as any plan could be under the circumstances. Desperate men have to take desperate steps, and the thought of Will locked up in Haroun's cellar inclined us toward anything rather than inaction. Dressed as Arabs, we were highly unlikely to excite suspicion by loitering in the dark bazaar tunnels. Speech with strangers could be declined at night without risk of arousing curiosity. The only danger I could see was of losing our way in the dark, or losing touch.

They sent me on ahead to watch the woman, as having the youngest eyes. Mahmoud had torn and soiled my Arab clothes, but that merely served to strengthen the disguise and further protect me from questions; men do not dally in Aleppo's dim passageways at night to cross-examine tall, lean Arabs with the marks of fighting on their persons.

FOR more than a mile I followed the woman and the girl at a short distance, making mental notes of turnings and the marks that should guide me back again. Then, after passing down a wide, arched street, we reached the open and I fell to the rear. Even then I could not content myself with keeping the woman in sight. I had to see the place where Will was imprisoned and when the Gipsy halted and hid in a shadow I drew near enough to watch the wide, iron-studded door, outside which two sentries stood looking lonely and solemn. They had told me that Haroun's rented house stood next beyond the governor's, but I could not make out its outlines in the dark.

Josephine was seized by a soldier as she tried to approach the door. I saw him raise a hand to hit the girl but could not determine whether he struck her or not before she made the nature of her errand clear. He rang a bell and struck the door with his rifle-butt. After an interminable wait the door was opened and Josephine was pushed inside.

There followed a half-hour of torture as keen in its way as the murderous bite of hot coals. Absurdity danced in the shadows and claimed itself mother of plans. Imagination pictured Josephine, questioned by eunuchs, silent under the lash and the torturing twisted thongs, breaking down at last and telling all she knew. Conscience whispered of the law of England and the consul in residence, sworn to apply it without fear or favor to all British subjects disrespectful of that law—as were not we? The ticking of my watch and singing heartbeats told of time that passed too slowly to be borne, yet too swiftly for our purpose. Surely the dragging—no, the swiftly hurrying—no, the dragging minutes meant that another plan was being laid in that dark house to spring surprizes and defeat us.

I forgot in that drawn-out anxiety that Haroun, the dissolute, had made himself so many enemies in Aleppo as to make the present situation seem likely enough to his parent. I forgot, too, Fatima's remark to the effect that the father would think himself lucky to get off with payment of a good, round sum, cash blackmail.

"'E 'as paid so often 'e is used to it!" she had told us.

In the governor's eyes, according to her, it would merely mean the nuisance of a night adventure and the awkward necessity of wringing extra taxes from an already outraged townsfolk. But one does not remember the optimism of a woman of her past when a child's fate hangs on a Moslem's credulity behind iron-studded doors in the dark. Ten times over I started along the street to go and demand admittance. Ten times I drew back again at sight of the Gipsy woman lurking in a shadow. She straightened each time I went near her and, for fear of her scorn, I did not go near enough to speak.

Then, at last, as I battled with impatience and a million self-accusing fears, the great door opened and three men emerged, one of whom was unmistakably the governor —big, heavy-bearded, his head bowed forward, striding manly. The other two were members of his official household by the look of them, well armed but without the air of servants. I thought at first Josephine was not with them. Then I saw that the man on the left was dragging her by the hand. He dragged her so violently that she stumbled and recovered. I stood two-minded in a corner shadow, wondering whether she had not passed the signal that meant warning against trickery. The woman, lurking in her dark place, made no move and gave no signal. I wondered whether Fred, who was supposed to be watching me, could see me and whether I ought to run or not and pass along the alarm.

But I did not run. Fascination held me rooted there and the Gipsy woman proved herself owner of nerve and good judgment. She lay until Josephine passed so close as almost to touch her skirts. They must have exchanged a whisper, for no sooner were they ten yards past her than she rose out of her shadow and gave me the signal agreed on as meaning "all safe."

So I turned and sped toward the nearest arched passage of the great bazaar, expecting every second—in spite of reason and common sense—to hear a bullet whiz after me or to hear the footsteps of an armed Turk in hot pursuit. An Arab runs rarely through city streets and when he runs does so desert-fashion. None seeing me that night would have been fooled for an instant by the headgear and flowing garments. Fred said afterward that I galloped down the tunnels like a churchyard ghost.

At any rate, he saw me in time, which was the principal thing. And if I ran like a ghost, he did so like a friar in orders—brown, beefy and short-winded, with his skirts hauled up around him and his strong, stout legs dancing a caper underneath. He held on in full career until Monty made sure of the signal and put some dignity into the proceedings by really running with the Arab stride. Then Fred let me overtake him and he and I arrived together at Fatima's door, only to be refused admission and sent up and down street to hide again in shadows and keep watch.

So I crouched where a dead dog awaited the scavenging clan and the rats in odoriferous unsanctity, wondering how the governor of a province should be able to pass along such streets at night without attracting crowds. In Europe—in America—wherever the white man plays the out-and-indoor game of spotting motes in neighbors' morals, there would have been reporters — idlers — merely curious — maliciously inquisitive—and a host of political enemies watching, none too secretly, to learn the outcome. But in Turkey and Turkey in Asia the governor's business on a dark night is very likely shared only by a victim and he who has the ill luck to run across him carefully averts his eyes or wisely runs. Whoever else saw the governor and his two attendants, with a little child leading them by the hand, we were the only ones who chose to admit it that night.

They hesitated at the entrance, muttering one to the other, Josephine tugging at the end man's hand but saying never one word. They faced her suddenly and asked her questions in savage whispers. But she only pointed at the door and covered her face with the dirty brown cloth she honored with the name of clothing.

Our business was to watch and make sure there was no cohort of armed men coming to wind up the night's proceedings with an all-around arrest. I did not see what good it would do us at that late stage to know that avenues of escape were all cut off and that men might pounce on us at their leisure, but it was part of the plan to continue looking out for the worst that might possibly happen and we did so.

But no footfalls ringing along the tunnels, no figures flitting swiftly from dark to dark, advised us of failure and presently we saw the Gipsy woman come out of a shadow to stand bold and graceful in a stream of yellow lamplight and repeat the "all's well" signal.

The governor and his two friends did not see her. They were calling on reserves of fear and courage—fear for Haroun's soft carcass and courage to take them forward. The door opened a little while they hesitated and a voice suspiciously like Fatima's said things in Turkish that one of the governor's friends answered arrogantly.

But arrogance did not pay. The voice behind the door laughed merrily. Knowing no Turkish, I could guess, nevertheless, the nature of the threats she made, chuckling and swinging the door a little back and forward, suggestive of invitation.

Finally the governor made his mind up and strode forward sturdily, the two other men hanging back and remonstrating still, doubtless by way of establishing a "told you so" position in case of ill success.

He kicked at the door, but it opened in front of him without any effort. The force of the kick was squandered at cost to his dignity. Then in he strode, swift and burly, in no mood to play with caution or to waste time once the die was cast. His friends followed him, each objecting to be last for fear of knives in the dark, compromising finally by dragging Josephine behind them.

We gave them just sufficient time to get well down the passage before we headed for the door ourselves. Then we ran in, Fred leading and the Gipsy woman last but least breathless, closed the outer door behind us with a snap that made the governor's two attendants jump two feet in air.

"Go on in," Fred urged them cheerily. "The dog don't bite. Nobody's going to hurt you."

But only the governor marched in like a man.

VII

FATIMA had placed more lamps about the room. It would have needed more than a chance kick now—more than one man's unsupported effort to overwhelm us in darkness. Haroun—the lure, the only argument, the one trump card—was nowhere to be seen.

Monty had charge of the situation, seated in a chair, of all things unexpected, looking incongruous in waxed mustache and Arab headdress, but too obviously sure of his ground to raise a smile.

"Be seated," he said in English, motioning toward the row of cushions by the wall. But the Turks preferred to stand.

The governor said something abrupt and to the point in Turkish, but Monty felt out of his depth in that tongue. He answered in Arabic, and thenceforward the conversation took place in a language he knew fairly well, and Fred knew perfectly.

Fred and I leaned against the wall on either side of Monty, with pistols drawn and cocked. His own pistol was pretty obvious, bulging ready to his hand.

"My son sent for me," announced the governor. "Where is he?"

"On the contrary, I sent for you," corrected Monty.

"Where is my son?"

"He is in this place."

"I do not believe you. Let me see him."

"You shall believe in good time," Monty answered gravely.

"*Insha Allah!*" said the Turk—If God wills! i. e., Let us hope so!—a fairly insolent retort.

The Gipsy woman came into the room then, locking the door behind her and disappearing under a hanging mat into one of the octopus-like passages. The governor shrugged his manly shoulders at the shot bolt, as much as to say that no threats could frighten him.

"First," said Monty, "there shall be an explanation."

"I need no explanation!" he snorted. "This is blackmail! Name the sum of money and produce my son! The sum of money shall be paid."

"That is where you are mistaken, my friend," Monty answered. "This is not blackmail."

"Then what is it? Show me my son!"

"In good time. I am aware, excellency, that the subject of a man's harem is not one he cares to discuss."

The firm line of the old Turk's lips grew stiff as iron and his companions froze into immobility.

"But circumstances alter cases and this is an occasion when, in spite of custom, your harem must not only be brought under consideration, but actually laid in the scale

against your son's—ah—what shall we say —well-being."

The Turk did not answer. Monty had broached the unmentionable subject, committing the unforgivable, proclaiming himself thus the enemy of Moslem manhood. By using his heaviest artillery first, he produced consternation in the enemy's ranks and caused all subsequent proposals and demands to seem, by comparison, mere bagatelles. The Turk, in spite of a gift of silence on occasion, wears his emotions on the surface, so that even he who runs may read.

"You have in your harem——"

"I will not speak of it!"

"—the widow of a rich Armenian, sister of Achmed McNamara, who owns the Golden Fox Line of steamers sailing out of Alexandria. You have no right to that woman or her property. You are to hand her over tonight, with all her belongings, including the papers proving her title to all the real estate in Aleppo that belonged to her late husband, the Armenian."

"I will not hear! I will not speak of it!"

For answer to that, Monty clapped his hands. At once the wall-hanging to our right was pulled aside, disclosing Haroun trussed and gagged, Fatima stooping over him with tongs holding red-hot charcoal in her hand.

"You see your son!" said Monty and the old Turk bowed his head.

"Nor is that all," Monty continued after a suitable pause.

"This only son of yours has a household of his own—servants of his own. He has even set up a prison of his own."

"No, no! That is not so!"

"Not so! Not so!" echoed the companions. "Such irregularities ceased long ago when the foreign consuls represented——"

"Silence!" growled the governor.

"A prison and a torture chamber of his own," Monty continued calmly. "He has made prisoner an American and a Turkish subject—the American a friend of mine and a partner; the Turkish subject my servant, entitled to protection of British law."

"Let the law take its course. I have nothing to do with that. Release my son and a sum of money shall be paid."

"The Turkish subject has been beaten."

"Doubtless he deserved it! My son, I hear, was beaten. He, too, deserved it! Nothing shall be said of beatings. Money shall be paid. Deliver him!"

"Do you play the game of chess?" Monty asked him.

The governor nodded.

"You are in check! You have only one course—to comply with my demands in every particular. Money payments can effect nothing. If you wish to have your son tonight, whole and alive, you must deliver first that widow woman with her property, that Turkish subject and that American."

There followed a good deal of whispering between the three Turks, the governor doing most of the listening.

"I have nothing to do with my son's household," the governor said at last.

"You are governor of Aleppo," Monty answered.

There was no sense in denying that, so the three men whispered again.

"The American has escaped," announced one of the companions.

"Who knows what may have happened in the streets to such a brawler since his escape?" asked the other.

Fred and I glanced at Monty and my own heart sank into my boots. In check the governor might be, but the savor of all our purpose was lost if harm had come to Will. Self-accusation returned in a flood. I was the one who had voted against Fred, to let Will wait in durance.

BUT trained cavalry leaders who can play the game of chess are not so easily defeated by mere statements of alleged fact. And check is check, with no gainsaying it.

"If that's so," said Monty, "you'd better be quick and find him, for Haroun's safety depends on his. The woman, the Turkish subject and the American—all three in our hands, with the woman's property, against your son, excellency! Time flies, let me remind you! I will not sit and argue forever!"

"The Turkish subject is already dead," announced the other of the governor's companions. He said it without consultation, but with the abrupt manner of a man who lets the truth escape him because the truth will out.

"How do you know that?" demanded Monty.

The Turk did not answer. It was a fine

kettle of fish for us, if true. In the first place, McNamara being a Turkish Mohammedan subject, no consular law could be made to touch his case. In the second place, without McNamara we would be helpless to identify the sister who was also a Turkish subject, amenable to Turkish law. But again Monty was not to be defeated by mere assertions.

"It will be all right, in that case, if you produce his body," he said pleasantly. "By the way, this conversation is growing too prolonged. I shall set a time limit. I give you ten minutes in which to reach a decision. At the end of ten minutes your son's voice from behind the hangings shall inform you of what is happening. The gag shall be removed from his mouth for your benefit."

Doubtless, if we ourselves had been bending over Haroun, the governor would have held out. He was too shrewd to mistake us for mean whites. Mean whites would have demanded a money ransom and would have behaved altogether differently. Moreover, even the meanest of mean English or Americans would shrink from torturing a tied man, as all Turks know. But Haroun lay at the mercy of a woman who had felt the heel of Turkey's white-slave tyranny, and that was different.

They whispered again, evidently not yet without hope of winning by trickery.

"It shall be done," said the governor at last.

Then in a flash I saw the danger of our situation. What should prevent the rearrest of McNamara and his sister, once Haroun should be given up? And what was to prevent our murder by way of reprisal? But Monty saw that too—in fact already had foreseen it.

"Then understand me. You, excellency, are not a prisoner here, of course. You came under flag of truce. But your son's —ah—comfort and condition, let us say, depend on your remaining. Leave if you wish, but with that understanding. McNamara and his sister and the American, Mr. Yerkes, are to be taken to the United States consulate at once and a receipt for their bodies and for the title deeds to the sister's property, signed by all three of them and by the consul, is to be brought back here to me.

"One of your companions may go at once and attend to that. One of my friends may go with him if you wish. While he is absent, I'll get you to be good enough to write out and sign a full discharge of the girl Fatima's debts. I don't care who pays them, but I want a clear discharge signed by you and written permission from you for her to leave the country."

The governor made no argument about that. Signing a discharge in full of debts payable to Feyamil, keeper of the coffeehouse, was too much like grim pleasantry to cause him the least concern. He took Monty's fountain pen and began to write at once.

"Send your man, then, with my man," he said simply and I saw him slip his signet ring to the man who was to do the errand, by way of conferring visible authority that eunuchs would recognize.

I had hoped I was to go on the trip to rescue Will, but Monty sent Fred, not because he resembled an Arab in appearance in the very least, but because of his ability with the language. It did not much matter, in tow of a Turkish official of the governor's household, whether his disguise should fail or not. As a matter of fact, the English trousers he had pulled above his knees were down about his ankles again and he walked off in that shape, frankly indifferent to curious eyes, his inseparable concertina dangling openly by a shoulder-strap.

The ensuing wait was boredom rendered concrete and intolerably long. Having yielded all along the line, the governor had no further interest in anything except the release of his contemptible son and heir. And he was not so pleased with himself and the night's work that he cared for conversation, nor yet so unwise as to doubt our intentions, since we had dared drag in the U. S. consul. Turkish phlegm, so called, is akin to torpor and existent only when there is no danger to apprehend. Governor and companion sat with crossed legs and folded their arms, saying nothing and, as far as we could judge, thinking less.

There was only one interlude to break the spell of heavy breathing silence. Monty and I were sitting with ears pricked for indications of treachery from outside, when I caught unexplainable sounds much closer at hand than any plan from which any calculable danger could arrive. After waiting for a minute in the stupid, sweating fear that small sounds produce on people

in dangerous places, I jumped for the wall-hanging next beside the entrance and dragged it aside.

I was just in time to pounce on Mahmoud before he could emerge into the room and start a fresh fight. How he had managed it was mystery. We had bound him as they cat the anchors—immovably. We had thrown him in a cupboard of a place and locked the door. He had only partly loosed himself, and that by inches, but he had broken the door down without making noise enough to startle us and had come like a crippled snake to wage new war for his master. I would have been gentler with him if I could, but nothing less than new ropes and tying him upright to a stone pillar at a distance down one of the passages—tying him so that a match could not pass between any portion of him and the stone—would have the least effect.

That accomplished, I returned to keep vigil beside Monty, who had covered the two Turks ostentatiously with his pistol while the excitement lasted, not that they made any effort or showed the slightest inclination to take advantage of the situation. The governor had simply given up the game—thrown down his hand—quit.

IT WAS an hour after midnight when Fred came back at last, without the governor's attendant but with no less than three armed men from the U. S. consul's guard to escort us to the consulate.

"The consul didn't want to wake up—didn't want to have anything to do with us—didn't want to admit us at such an hour," he announced, "but Will knew just how to tackle him and the consul turns out to be a good fellow. Yes, Will is all right. So is McNamara—a trifle cut and bruised about the feet—doesn't walk with any comfort, but otherwise in fine shape. The lady Thabita, his sister, has ceased to be slim or very youthful but is glad to be at liberty and makes us the personal appeal for help that we insisted on. What are you waiting for?"

Monty was writing busily on a page of his pocket-book.

"Somebody must take this to Griffenhahn, the German," he said, folding the note and discovering an envelope. He had foreseen everything.

So one of the consular guard was sent off post-haste to find the German's house, get him out of bed and place Monty's message in his hands. Then Fatima was called out and presented with her discharge and permission to travel.

"What's the use?" she said simply. "I've no money."

"Have you paid that Gipsy woman or Josephine for the night's work?"

"I had nothing to pay them with."

Monty always carries money. Time and again we have found that inviolable rule of his worth more to us in a tight place than all the passports, guns, pluck and permits we could muster. I did not see how much he gave either the Gipsy or Josephine, but I did see Josephine's round eyes and the Gipsy's racial ecstasy at the feel of money.

"Are we ready?" he asked and we filed out, leaving the governor and his companion to untie Haroun and the servants.

On the way Fatima told us that the mats and meager furniture of the place belonged to an absent merchant who had another place of business in Damascus. The Gipsy had stolen the key from the wife of the man who had charge of it and would return it before morning. It would be no use for the governor to try to visit vengeance on the owner of the storage-vault, for he had too good an alibi. Moreover, all the furnishings, rugs included, were scarcely worth official seizure.

At the United States consulate the only shock in store for us was the condition of McNamara's feet, which was worse than Fred had intimated. They had continued to beat the unfortunate man after his confession, probably for the sake of making him retract and so justifying further torture. But luckily for him he had merely blabbed out all the truth and stuck to it.

Thabita—fat and homely, less like a bride to look at than the mother, or even the grandmother, of the woman in the photograph that McNamara showed us on his steamer—had bound up the tortured feet and was making a fuss over him, McNamara not at all objecting.

Monty, in the consul's presence, called her to the table.

"You wish us to help you in this matter?"

She nodded. He named the sum he had agreed on with Griffenhahn.

"Will you be satisfied with that price for your property?"

She nodded again. It was not likely she would refuse any price at that time and under those circumstances.

"McNamara—how about you?"

"No, sir! No! It is worth two million if a penny! She shall not take less!"

"Two million?" the consul snorted. "Man, you're crazy! A quarter of a million Turkish pounds is half as much again as it is worth!"

"I'm glad to hear you say that," said Monty. "That, I take it, is disinterested evidence. It's the best we can get under the circumstances. McNamara, you shall permit your sister to accept that price or we'll turn you loose to play your own game with the Turks."

"But blast and shiver it! I've got to share with you! How much will be left me? How much will you have the face to demand for your share?"

"Now we come to a question," said Monty, "that I am not competent to decide alone. My friends and I are a partnership. I propose that each of us shall write on a slip of paper what he considers ought to be our joint share. The average of the sums named should be the sum to agree on."

"I don't agree! I don't agree!" yelled McNamara. "I need money for my ships! How shall I lift my mortgages if you get your unconscionable share? I will never agree!"

"All the same," said Monty, "suppose you fellows write."

So we wrote down our individual opinions on little slips of paper and passed them to Monty, who did not look at them, but added his own slip and passed the four to the consul.

"I don't agree! I don't agree!" bellowed McNamara, his voice beginning to resume a little of its former bullying note.

The consul examined the slips of paper and laughed.

"The top one is blank," he said. "The second contains the word 'Nothing.' The third reads ooooo. And the fourth says 'The money is hers, not his. Tell her to keep it all and keep control of it."

"I'll bet that last one was Fred's," said I.

"No, it wasn't," said Will.

"It states the case," said Monty. "One more thing—Fatima did the ticklish work in this affair. She is fully entitled to payment for it."

"Oh," said McNamara grandiosely, "anything in reason. Treat the girl liberally. Fifty—a hundred pounds——"

"Ten thousand!" said Monty.

Fatima giggled in a corner of the room. McNamara flew into a passion.

"Blast and shiver it! Whose money do you think you give away? Shall I go through all this torture and danger to see my money squandered on a——"

"Ten thousand!" Monty answered firmly. "And that's enough from you. If your sister agrees, then that settles it."

Thabita agreed very swiftly when the consul had explained to her exactly what was meant. Then we all sat down to wait, in varying stages of sleepiness, for Griffenhahn, on whose respect for his own written promise the rest of the night's work depended.

He arrived almost at the peep of dawn and swaggered into the room as if he expected to have to fight his way out again. He laughed uproariously at our disarranged disguises but drew no response in kind.

"Have you brought those drafts with you?" asked Monty.

"Yes. I got them ready yesterday afternoon, but I don't believe you have the *quid pro quo*."

Monty pointed to papers on the table.

"Those are evidence of title to the property you want. Examine them. The consul is willing to witness the sale. You can see to registration yourself at any time."

"But why the American consul?" asked the German. "Oh, I understand—ha-ha! —of course!—a little sense of delicacy—wouldn't do, would it, to drag the British consul in?"

Monty said nothing in reply to that, but looked on quietly while McNamara's sister signed the transfer of the title, and most of us witnessed the signature. Then Heinrich von Trottrich Griffenhahn tossed the drafts on the table. The consul examined them, passed that for ten thousand pounds to Fatima and handed the others to McNamara's sister.

"Take my advice and keep control of the money," he said simply.

Then Monty turned to Heinrich von Trottrich Griffenhahn and smiled his blandest.

"As you remarked," he said, "I was anxious not to drag the British consul in. But as soon as I've shaved and breakfasted

I'm going to call on him and tell him the whole story, including your share in it, and how you've paid half as much again as the property is worth. Would you care to meet me at the consulate and share the fun?"

BUT Griffenhahn did not put in an appearance at the British consulate, although he saw us leave there for the coast with our party, riding McNamara's horses once again, but provided for the journey with four consular guards guaranteed to prevent Turkish reprisals on the way—not that we expected any. The Turks lose fairly gentlemanly.

The story that went the rounds of Europe afterward about the Earl of Montdidier and Kirkudbrightshire becoming involved in Asia Minor with some woman of the underworld was set in motion by the fact that we four set Fatima on board ship for France and her gratitude to Monty was witnessed by two missionaries' wives.

The same identical ladies told most unrighteous stories about Fred, for they were scandalized by the last verse of the song he made and yowled for the benefit of all who did not plug their ears:

"Achmed McNamara, oh, tarara, oh, tarara,
Returns to the Sahara where the old *zariba* stood.
Sick of needless night alarums in the land of guarded harems
Where a sound at night will scare 'em, he is going home for good.
He will love the dusky ladies where the sand is hot as Hades
And the far horizon beckons the *Don Juan* who can run.
Oh, it's not so much locality, or climate, or morality—
He's sickened of formality—the eunuch with the gun!
So it's home for McNamara—oh, tarara, oh tarara,
Where a man of merry manners may employ a zest for life.
Where if bad luck should befall him, then the prospect won't appal him
'Cause the husbands who would maul him have no weapon but a knife."

Buddy of Mine

by Lydia M. D. O'Neil

BUDDY of mine, you stuck to me
When my heart was down and out,
When the trail was rough as a trail could be,
And the end of it all in doubt.
Your hand on my shoulder whenever it sagged—
"Buck up!"—and I'd straightway buck;
And it's thanks to you that the jinx is bagged,
That his horns are cracked and his heels are snagged,
For, buddy of mine, you stuck!

Buddy of mine, I stuck to you
When the sky was about to drop,
And shoulder to shoulder we fought it through
Till we landed safe on top.
'Twas only a part of the sportsman's code
To stick till you changed your luck;
I was only squaring the debt I owed
When I helped a trifle to ease your load—
But, buddy of mine, I stuck!

So, buddy of mine, we'll pal it out
Till earth drops into the sun!
Till we come to the camp of the Silent Scout,
Where the longest trails are done!
For bitter the savor of bread unshared
When the heart is tired and sick;
So we'll fare together as we have fared,
All ventures daring, as we have dared—
Oh, buddy of mine, we'll stick!

McCarnie's Second Bet

by H. A. Lamb

Author of "The Skull of Shirzad Mir," "Said Afzel's Elephant," etc.

I

IF YOU haven't been to Punta Arenas, the odds are more than a thousand to one you'll never go. I've been to Punta Arenas and you can name your own odds that I do not go again. It would be a safe bet.

If you don't know where Punta Arenas is—which is most likely the case—take a map of the world and put your finger on the southernmost city on Magellan Strait, at the tip of South America.

Sometimes it's called the jumping-off place of the world, maybe because there's nothing south of it except Tierra del Fuego, a waste land of snow, mountains, peat-bogs, an Argentine prison station and general unmitigated misery.

Only once did Tierra del Fuego attract the world's attention. Gold was found there a generation ago, in the beach *barranca*. It was washed by hand at first, and the yield was good; then companies were formed, machinery bought, stock sold, and the gold petered out. Most every week of my stay in Punta, the town newspaper had a notice of the winding-up of some *sociedad aurifera*.

A couple of the mines—those at Lenox Island and Slogget Bay—still show signs of life, and every now and then the gold rumor crops up. But the boom days are over.

I heard one disgruntled prospector say that the first *conquistadores* had got their gold by washing the black sand on the coast of Tierra del Fuego, and that there were no quartz veins. Some say otherwise. But the men who care to go into Tierra del Fuego after gold or anything else are few. Too many of the first rush of prospectors left their skeletons along the *barranca*. Cold, the four-hour days and the isolation of the waste land claimed them.

Captain Herrera of the prison camp at Ushuaia in Tierra del Fuego once remarked to me that "when the Lord separated the land from the water, He forgot Tierra del Fuego."

Herrera used to make regular trips in the official launch from Ushuaia to Punta for supplies and mail; also to get his fill of drinks and a game of poker. That was how I came to know him. For an Argentine, he played a good poker hand. I liked him. He was square.

I played the game at Punta, although never before or since. There was nothing else to do except to speculate on the arrival of the occasional P. S. N. C. steamers, or listen to the phonograph at the club, or drink the American cocktails at the shore shanties.

It was at the Kosmos, the white-washed stone hotel on the shore where visiting scientists sometimes put up, that I first saw Tom McCarnie.

McCarnie was a six-foot Scotchman with a face from which all the life seemed to have been blotted out; his shoulders were wide and bent. He wore a suit of decent "blacks" as weather-stained as his countenance. I never have known a man who said as little. His age was probably near forty, but he looked fifty.

"He came from the Falklands in a

skiff," the clerk told me. "One of the sheep men waiting for the next steamer."

McCarnie refused to be friendly. He had no friends in the town, and when he was not eating his meals at the Kosmos, he walked through the streets of Punta, staring at the two or three fashionable victorias belonging to the millionaires of the place—Punta has its rich men of the wool brand, and its elaborate dwellings, side by side with the corrugated iron shacks—or looking on at the card games of the club, the *Cuerpo de Bomberos*.

Few Scotchmen play poker. I never saw McCarnie take a hand until that evening Herrera arrived bent on amusement. In response to a note from the Argentine, I looked him up at the club.

Herrera and McCarnie were both sitting in at a five-handed game. The stakes were fairly high, even that early—jack-pots calling for five dollars from each man and a fifty-dollar limit. When he saw me the Argentine promptly cashed in his chips and gave up his place.

"We will see the town, Davis," he laughed, slapping me on the shoulder and shrugging his slender shoulders under the braid on his uniform. "My word! We will have an evening of gaiety."

He spoke good English and took pride in up-to-date slang. Out of hearing of the men at the table, he grimaced. Then I understood why he had been so willing to leave the game.

"Those two—bah!" He piloted me away by the arm. "Four times before you came they held threes to my two pair. They are—what you say?—sharp customers, undoubtedly. And I like not to play marked cards."

"Who?"

"Todd and Randall—*Señor* Todd and *Señor* Randall. They invite me to play with that McCarnie——"

I glanced back over my shoulder. The Scotchman had a good pile of chips in front of him, and his dark face was inscrutable. I guessed that he could take care of himself. Later, I heartily wished that I had tipped him off as to Herrera's warning.

We made the round of the shore shanties in the ever-present drizzle of rain, paid a call or two on Herrera's lady friends of officialdom and heard the gossip of four months ago told for the second time. It was a red-letter evening for my friend from Ushuaia, but I had long since grown tired of the routine gaiety of Punta.

Herrera, though, would not turn in. He sat on my cot, smoked the last of my American cigarets and talked incessantly about himself. He noted that I was curious about McCarnie and craftily included the Scotchman in his remarks. The captain seemed to know everything that went on in the three-cornered world of Tierra del Fuego, the Falklands and Punta.

"McCarnie worked like one fiend, Davis, my friend," he informed me volubly, thereby earning himself another half hour of wakefulness, "for the F. I. C. *Santa Maria*. I know not why a man should work like such ——, taking care of sheep, unless it is for a woman. What will we not do for a woman, my friend Davis?"

He was silent for a second, ruminating on this interesting thought.

"McCarnie must be married," he decided, twirling his mustache regretfully, because he is the owner of a daughter. But his sheep he has sold, and I have heard from the Falkland Islands Company that he returns to his Scotland."

I appropriated the remaining cigarets, while Herrera sighed at this evidence of lack of confidence in himself.

"Look here, Herrera," I observed, realizing that McCarnie must be in funds if he had sold out his sheep ranch, "we ought to warn the man that Todd and Randall are crooked!"

"Crooked? Ah, yes." He shrugged his shoulders, having that cat-like aversion to discomfort that is peculiar to the Latin race. "But it rains, and why should you become wet because of a man you know not?"

It was true that McCarnie had confined his remarks to me to a morose "gude evening, Mr. Davis," and "it will be a fine morning." But he had not spoken at all, so far as I could observe, to any one else in Punta, and I dislike Todd.

So I dragged the protesting Herrera to the club. We found a crowd around the table where Todd and the Scotchman sat.

McCARNIE had been losing heavily and the fifty dollar limit had been raised to the sky. His harsh face was flushed, and he fumbled the cards. Like most inexperienced men, his losses

had affected him and weakened whatever skill he might have had at the game. In this condition it was useless for him to bluff. The cards, too, were running against him.

I watched several hands without detecting what particular deviltry Todd was up to. Todd was a bald man, past middle age, with alert, furtive eyes and clothes that showed American tailoring. What his nationality was, I don't know.

Many in Punta stayed there at that time because no extradition treaties could get at them. Todd, and I suspect Randall, was of this breed. He got hold of money somehow whenever he needed it—shady gambling, smuggling ventures—profitable because Punta was a free port—or speculation in the unstable Chilean currency.

He was one of those men described as living by their wits. His was a dirty kind of life, yet he had excellent manners, was a glib talker and attached himself to the wealthy of Punta.

"Better call it a day and cash in," I advised McCarnie. He turned a pair of fierce eyes upon me.

"I'll thank ye, Mr. Davis, to let me mind my own affairs!"

That was the answer I got, and it naturally kept me quiet until the end of the game, which came quickly. Randall dealt.

McCarnie looked at two pair—kings up on tens—and made it a hundred to come in. Todd was the only one who stayed with him and Todd raised fifty without looking at his hand.

"I've a hunch," he grinned at Herrera.

"Undoubtedly," admitted that gentleman coldly. "So did I—and I played no more."

McCarnie's fresh card didn't help his two pair any. Todd took three new ones and scowled. The Scotchman tried to force out his opponent baldly and found that Todd had three deuces. That hand cost him a thousand.

Five minutes later Randall filled a straight from the inside and took the remainder of the chips from McCarnie, who held three queens. Todd had dealt.

"This time the ladies don't win, McCarnie," he grinned, leaning back in his chair. The onlookers shuffled away through the smoky room. It was late, even for Punta.

The pleasure of the evening—watching others hazard wealth—was over for the drifters who had no money and for those who had wanted to sleep before spending more.

"How much did you lose?" I asked McCarnie.

He pushed a gnarled hand across his eyes, and I saw his fingers were quivering. The lines in his dour face were deeper than usual. He did not answer.

"Seventy-five hundred and forty dollars he lost," Todd informed me.

Todd never lost a chance to ingratiate himself with me, but I wanted none of his friendship.

"Didn't know a Jock ever to play poker before."

"No," gibed Randall. "He'll keep to sheep after this, all right."

Todd broke off to watch Herrera. That debonair individual was examining the pack of cards they'd been using, feeling the corners for pricks or nail marks. He paid particular attention to the aces and face cards.

Todd drained the remnant of drink in his glass and looked around vainly for the steward, who was asleep.

"What the —— are you doing?" he asked.

"That is for me to know and you to find out," responded the Argentine promptly.

Herrera had once heard me say that and liked the phrase. He held a card to the light and tossed it down with a shrug. Randall blinked heavy, blood-shot eyes uneasily, but Todd sprang nimbly to his feet, his features sharp as those of a cornered rat.

"You say we cheated, Herrera? You say that?"

The handsome Argentine rolled himself a cigaret and lit it, winking profoundly at the smoke-puff. Todd's shrill voice had been too self-righteous.

"Either," said Herrera, "you and *Señor* Randall had the good luck of the devil, or—" his dark eyes went amiably from one to the other of the poker players—"McCarnie had devilish bad luck. What made you think I suspect you of cheating, Todd, my would-be friend?"

That individual scowled, then forced a grin, finding the talk unpleasant. He vented his surliness on McCarnie. Taking a Chilean bank-note from his pocket—one for a few *pesos*—he placed it before the silent Scotchman.

"To pay your way back to the F. I. C., Jock. Better leave a gentleman's game

to gentlemen." He chuckled at his own wit, being more than slightly drunk. "Goo'-night, Jock. Get some more money, and by —— we'll take you on again—way a gentleman should."

With that the two went off. Herrera swore, then yawned and pulled at me good-naturedly to go back to the Kosmos. Then the Scot lifted gloomy eyes and gazed thoughtfully at Herrera.

"Man," he cried gruffly, "d'ye mean they two played a crooked game?"

"Undoubtedly, McCarnie." Herrera shrugged his shoulders. "The cards do not seem to be marked, but there are other ways."

McCarnie lurched to his feet, and from his black scowl I thought he meant to seek a reckoning with the departed gamesters, so, realizing that such action would be disastrous under the circumstances, I told him there was nothing he could do unless the fraud was proved, which I knew was impossible now.

"Mr. Davis came here in the rain for only one reason—to warn you, McCarnie," grumbled Herrera.

"Why did you play with Todd?" I asked curiously.

But the Scot would not say. His hands gripped the table tightly, and there was a look in his unlovely face of a parent bereaved of a child.

"*Santa Maria!*" observed Herrera as the two of us trudged back through the rain, "a Scotchman loves his silver. I remember now that when McCarnie sold his ranch to the F. I. C. he said, as his reason, that he must have money to take back with him to Scotland."

"Why?" I asked.

"How should I know?"

"He has a family?"

"A daughter—lucky man! A letter was sent him, they say, and he sold his sheep before the shearing—a bad time."

Two things that Herrera said did not jibe with the character of Tom McCarnie as I sized him up. A Scotchman, of his age and shrewdness, was not apt to play American poker for high stakes, or to sell out his property at an unfavorable time—unless he had to have money. And, since McCarnie could not need it for himself in the Falklands, it must be for his daughter. I didn't know why and I don't yet. McCarnie never told.

II

WITH the bank-note Todd had tossed him, McCarnie paid his reckoning at the Kosmos. He took off the small satchel of his belongings. Where he stayed then, I could not learn. Several times I saw him walking the waterfront, but he always turned the other way when he saw me coming.

The skiff went back to the islands, but McCarnie did not go with it. The up-coast steamer he had planned to take came, hove-to off Punta and puffed away while half the town watched—among the watchers McCarnie.

The sight of his shambling figure in the black suit became common around the docks, and once I saw him barter two handfuls of mussels from a native boatman for a copper coin.

It was the day after that, and rainy as usual, that McCarnie came to my room in the Kosmos. I asked him to sit down and take some of my tobacco. He did neither. He stood, fumbling at his coat.

"Mr. Davis, man!" he blurted out, "wull ye be lending me enough to buy an outfit? Ye'll hae my bag for surety."

He glared uncomfortably. I guess it was the first time he had asked for a loan. His pride hurt him sorely.

"How much and for how long, McCarnie?" I inquired.

"Four pound, 'till next summer."

"What kind of an outfit can you buy in Punta for twenty dollars?" Not much of a one, I knew.

"'Twill do nicely, Mr. Davis."

I tried another tack, wishing to get at the man's story.

"McCarnie, you want to go back to Scotland to your daughter, don't you?"

"Oh aye. She'll be needing me."

"At once?"

"Oh aye. No doot. But I must have the money."

Now I couldn't lend him enough for the trip back. He knew that, and my questioning had touched his pride in a sore spot.

"Man!" he cried, "I'm no askin' ye for charity. Ye have the worrd o' Tom McCarnie that the four pound will be paid back wi' the interest."

That was a bitter thrust.

"McCarnie," I laughed, "I'll gladly

let you have the twenty dollars, only I thought—" I hesitated— "that Captain Herrera might have a job——"

"No, Mr. Davis. I'll be doing a bit of prospecting."

"Where?" I asked, counting out the the money.

"Yonder." He jerked his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of Tierra del Fuego.

That was all he would say. I reflected that as it was then late summer the winter season would soon drive McCarnie back to Punta.

I was wrong. The snow and the cold came and the mists settled down on Magellan Strait. The few white men who had sheep on the Tierra del Fuego side of the strait came over to winter in Punta. No one else came from Fireland. No one, that is, except the pleasure-seeking Herrera from Ushuaia.

III

HERRERA came to spend Christmas and lingered, after his fashion. "*Santa Maria!*" he cried, "but yonder is undoubtedly the devil's skating-rink, friend Davis. There is nothing in Tierra del Fuego but ice and snow and snow and ice and the williwaws and the frozen spray of the channels."

I thought of McCarnie. Possibly the silent Scot was still out, working his way through the mountain chains of that God-forsaken place. If he had returned I would have heard of it, for there is no way out of Tierra del Fuego except across the strait to Punta. I asked Herrera if he had seen McCarnie. Perhaps the Scot had taken refuge in the Ushuaia barracks.

"Ah yes, Mr. Davis, I have seen him. He must be mad. He is at Picon Island. Once he paddled to Ushuaia in an Indian canoe."

Now Picon Island is just south of the prison site where the wide Beagle channel opens out into the dead-line of the Atlantic and Pacific. The island is not far from Slogget Bay where the most promising of the gold mines is. A barren waste of rock, seaweed-strewn *barranca* and scattering groves of stunted Arctic beeches.

Not a pleasant spot, when all is told, and in the mid-winter. . . .

"He is undoubtedly very mad," pursued my companion, rolling himself a cigaret lazily, "but then he has found the gold—some."

He reached in his pocket and showed me an oil-skin bag which contained a scrap of soiled paper and very small particles of gold.

"McCarnie," he explained, "knew I would come to Punta, and he sends this to you, my friend. The paper shows the claims he wants you to register in his name. The gold, he said, will pay what he owes you."

On the paper a rough outline of Picon Island was drawn, and the claim marked. It took up a good deal of the island, from the beach inland.

Well, I registered the claim, as McCarnie wished, and had a notice printed in the Punta newspaper. It started talk. Speculators and hangers-on dropped in to cross-examine me about what I knew.

That was very little—only Herrera had said the rock of Picon was worth working.

Had McCarnie struck real pay-dirt in Picon? Was there a quartz vein in the rock ridges of the island? Had McCarnie, by blind luck or dog-like persistence, struck on the wealth he sought?

I had no answer. I wondered how the Scot could work his claim in mid-winter with the ground frozen and frequent snowfalls. And I wondered why he did not come himself to Punta.

Perhaps McCarnie had to have gold at once. I had sensed his need of it after Todd and Randall fleeced him. Another man would have hung around Punta cursing his luck and reviling Todd and Randall. McCarnie was different.

The two gamblers came to my office and questioned me. I kept my mouth shut about McCarnie, and they went off no wiser than they had come.

When the ice began to break along the edges of the strait, McCarnie arrived in Punta. It was characteristic of the man that he'd completed his business before he saw me. He'd got an assay report of his gold specimens.

Now I knew precious little about mining, but that report struck me as A-1. Also, the Scot showed me gold—particles of free gold. They seemed to me to be very small, but there was no mistaking their richness.

McCarnie looked older. His hands

were scarred and stiff. He limped from the after-effects of severe frost-bite. His powerful shoulders were hunched, and if ever a man looked done up, Tom McCarnie was that man.

I gave him the title-deeds to his claim, and he put them in his pocket alongside the assay report, after reading them through carefully, word for word.

"It will be a gude evening, Mr. Davis," he observed dourly, casting a look out of my window.

"You seem to have struck it rich, McCarnie," I ventured. "Half Punta is talking about your discovery. The gold rumor's afloat again. They say the Sloggett Bay vein may run out to Picon."

"It may." He rubbed his whiskers dubiously. "Mr. Davis, ye have been no sich a bad friend. I've heard ye are leaving for the upper coast——"

"For the U. S. A., McCarnie," I assured him. "By the next steamer."

"And when may that be?"

I told him, whereupon he left with a muttered "good-night." A hard man to read was Tom McCarnie. His good luck seemed to make him more anxious. He had the look of a man who was facing trouble. Again I wondered what might be the need of his family in Glasgow.

But he couldn't altogether hold, under his exultation. That evening the clerk at the Kosmos informed me that the Scot was at the *Cuerpo de Bomberos* and drunk.

I hurried over there. McCarnie sat with his boots on the card table, in his shirt-sleeves, a glass of liquor in his hand. Todd and Randall were with him. The weasel-faced gambler grinned at me, and I knew he meant no good to the Scot.

"McCarnie," said I, "come back to the hotel with me."

"I'll thank ye, Mr. Davis," he retorted, with the stumbling dignity of a man far gone in drink, "to be mindin' your own business."

Whereupon he launched into a muttered monologue on the rich gold he had taken in his hands out of Picon Island. Todd and the others hung on his words. I saw a muscle twitch in the gambler's cheek—a thing that only happened when he was deeply stirred. They were pumping McCarnie of all he would tell them. For once he was talkative.

"'Twas a blessing fra the Lord put the thought o' Picon Island into my head," he declared solemnly. "The righteousness o' the Lord abides with those who are in need, and His wrath with the evildoers."

Todd laughed, and the others echoed him. I left them there, for McCarnie was not to be influenced in that mood. At the hotel, the clerk stopped me and whispered.

"Now there will be a rush to Picon. The weather is open. Why do you not charter a boat and go to Picon? Soon many will go. You can be there ahead of them and choose the best claim. I will go with you, perhaps——"

"No," I said to the clerk who was a drifter of Cuban-Mexican parentage. "Tomorrow morning I start for home. The steamer's in."

He was right, though. The next day I sat on the boat-deck of the Buenos Aires steamer, after watching the steward stow my luggage, and I saw the sails raised on at least two schooners by the jetties. A thirty-ton launch, filled with men and stores, chugged out past us into the broad sweep of Magellan Strait.

I was not sure, but I thought I saw Todd's dapper figure in the stern-sheets. I thought of McCarnie. Providence deals strangely with men sometimes. Here was McCarnie. He had been cheated by Todd. He had faced in Tierra del Fuego what few men would have cared to undergo. Now he was back again and the gamblers had their hands on him. Some men seem to be marked as the prey of others.

I had not thought McCarnie was that kind. Still, he had been drunk the night before and with Todd. Now his secret was out, and half a dozen gangs were getting together to go to Picon—Todd among them. Where McCarnie was, I had not been able to learn.

The steamer's blast roared overhead, and the launches circled away from her. A clatter forward, as the anchor came up, a thrash of the gray water under the stern, and she pointed her blunt nose toward the Atlantic end of the strait.

"WE'LL be leaving Punta, Mr. Davis."

I swung around. The tall figure of McCarnie stood behind me, his leather-hued face agleam with satisfaction and a cold pipe between his teeth.

"Maybe ye'll sell me a bit o' tobacco, Mr. Davis," he observed. "I have none o' the stuff."

I handed him my pouch, refusing his silver, and he filled and lit his pipe with the methodical care of one who knows the value of good tobacco. I watched him, surprized at his presence on the vessel. Moreover, the man's manner had changed. He was as awkward and taciturn as ever, but he had the bearing of one at peace with himself and his surroundings.

"I gave ye hard words, the night," he remarked meditatively. "I'll no say I meant them. I meant no offense."

"No, you were drunk, McCarnie."

"I'd no say I was that," he objected cautiously.

I wondered if he were wise in leaving Punta when Todd and the others were putting off for Tierra del Fuego. There is no law in Tierra del Fuego, outside the limits of the prison station, and a man must look after his own claims.

When I told him this, adding that I thought I'd seen Todd in the launch, he nodded.

"Oh, aye, that would be Todd and his partner."

He puffed at his pipe, drawing his chair to the rail beside mine. Far off down the strait, Todd's launch was invisible except for the plume of smoke that circled as the vessel was gripped by the swift tide-rips. McCarnie eyed it with grim approval.

I was thinking of the daughter that needed McCarnie in the old country, and I wondered if this need had made him reckless, as once before in the poker game. But his next words banished this train of thought.

"Todd will be going to look at his new mine, Mr. Davis. He and Randall and their friends bought my claims last night—for a matter o' twenty-six hundred pound. Bank o' England notes."

So the Scot had sold out to Todd, of all men. The price seemed cheap, too, but when I mentioned this he chuckled.

"I'd no say that, Mr. Davis." He shook his head, with another mutter of almost silent laughter. "No, Todd paid dear for his title. He'll be seeing that himself before long. Oh, aye."

Now McCarnie was clearly sober and he was pleased with his bargain. Yet Todd was not the man to be bested easily in a sale.

"But the claim's worth a lot of money," I objected. "It assayed high and——"

"Man!" He leaned forward and placed a heavy hand on my knee. "No doot. Ye saw the gold and so did Todd. It fired his blood. Yet it came from no mine."

This puzzled me, for McCarnie could not have bought the stuff—being broke. Moreover, if he had done so at Punta, Todd would have known of it.

"Yon gold," observed McCarnie reflectively, "came fra the hand o' the Lord, no less. Ye mind the way the first prospectors had their gold? 'Twas washed fra the black sand o' the *barranca*. On the beach o' Picon Island I washed it wi' my hands."

He paused to light the last core of his pipe.

"The storms wash the black sand up, Mr. Davis. Aye. When the storm passed I'd wash the gold by hand. For seven months I worked to gain the few ounces—maybe sixty pounds' worth—maybe less. I doot Todd will find it profitable."

All winter McCarnie had labored on that God-forsaken beach to get the wherewithal to prepare his claim for his revenge on Todd. But I had not heard the end of the story yet.

"Herrera said the rock specimens were worth working," I reminded him, knowing that Todd had heard this remark and set much store by it.

"That would be his little joke," said McCarnie gravely. "Man, yon claims are workable. 'Tis there the prison gangs of Ushuaia break rock under the orders of Mr. Herrera."

With that he pocketed his pipe and rose.

"I'll gi' ye back the tobacco at Rio, Mr. Davis. 'Tis no a bad evening."

The Last Joke of Joker Joe

by Hapsburg Liebe

Author of "Godfather to Satan's Kitchen," "Rock Creek Jim Ripplemead's Boy," etc.

IT WASN'T that he didn't care for Annie Belle as he should have cared for her, for he did; he held her in a light that was little less than idolatrous. He played pranks at her expense just as he played pranks at the expense of everybody else.

Some of those who knew him best said that it was a family trait and called to mind the fact that all the Seavers of Bay Horse Mountain were jokers and had been since the oldest inhabitant could remember. Others who knew him just as well were reasonably sure that it was a birthmark.

"Joker Joe" Seaver was big, strong and good-looking enough, and he had a way that caught with women; that is why, no doubt, Annie Belle Hanson of the Bay Horse Mountain Hansons married him. Joe had a good job as fireman of a battery of three big boilers in the great sawmill in the valley below, a job that had employed two men before his advent, and he made good money.

He had, when he married Annie Belle, a cozy cabin all furnished nicely, with everything paid for. Annie Belle soon made a home of the little house of logs; she washed and scrubbed and tidied, arranged and rearranged until Joe himself hardly knew the place when he came home from his second day's work as a married man. Joe told people about it, and they wondered whether he would ever dare to play jokes on his very magnificent young wife. In point of fact, they wondered so hard that they laid bets on the matter.

The affirmatives said that, as Joe had played pranks with his mother and his sisters as victims, he would play them with his wife for a victim after he had come to know her better. He couldn't help it, they said, any more than an ordinary man could help breathing. And this was the side that won.

Joker Joe Seaver hadn't been double for two weeks before he had put salt in the sugar-bowl, sugar in the salt-shaker, vanilla in the coffee and a baby rabbit in the flour-bin; also he scared Annie with an artificial mouse once. At the first, Annie Belle pretended that she enjoyed it and perhaps she really did; but it soon became tiresome. The young woman had wisely realized that there was something far more serious in life than the mere foolish playing of pranks.

She told Joe over and over that it was silly. But Joe only laughed. Joe was a great laugher. Then he played the joke that should have been his last, and wasn't. But it was the next to the last.

Now Seaver was a good actor, a splendid actor, as are nearly all really proficient jokers. He had what people in certain circles describe more or less picturesquely as a "poker face;" which is

to say, of course, that you couldn't possibly tell by his countenance anything about what was going on in the inside of him.

Joker Joe strode solemnly and frowningly into the lean-to kitchen of his cabin one evening early in June and deliberately placed on the top of the home made cupboard a hickory withe five feet long; it was of the kind that is used in the whipping of horses. Then he turned that grave poker face of his toward Annie Belle, who was frying bacon for supper.

"What's that big switch for, Joe?" Annie asked smilingly.

"The fust time my breakfas' is late," said Joe, his voice a bearish growl, "ye'll find out what it's for."

There are times when, as anybody knows, people whose moral and physical stamina is ordinarily of the best find their nerves on edge and taut. Annie Belle's nerves were on edge and taut. All that day she had been lonesome for the home she had left and for her father and mother and her brothers and sisters. She did not, therefore, quite catch the spirit of fun of the moment. Her face went a little pale, and the fork fell clattering to the floor. Joker Joe tried to laugh then, but it was somehow a sorry thing. The joke had fallen short.

"Do ye mean, Joe—" came the low, unsteady voice of his wife—"do ye mean——"

"I don't mean nothin'!" cried Joe and his smile was as poor as his laugh of a moment before. "I was jest a-foolin' ye, Annie Belle! Haw-haw-haw! But ye shore looked like as ef ye'd seed a ghost. Haw-haw-haw!"

Annie Belle stood stock-still and stared hard. Apparently she was rather inclined toward believing that her prank-playing young husband had been in earnest in the matter of the hickory withe. Joe tried to take her into his arms, but the look she gave him was enough to cause him to relinquish that intention.

"Fo'give me, honey," he pleaded somewhat sheepishly. "I was only jest a foolin'."

Annie Belle continued to stare at him.

"Don't ye never," she admonished soberly, "try to play another joke on me."

She suffered him to kiss her on the forehead. Joe laughed a laugh that could have made a horse blush. The spell was broken and he was again happy.

IT WAS on the following morning that Joker Joe Seaver played his last joke. It was a very little thing—at first. He got a grin out of it, and that was all—just then. Annie Belle smiled; it was the kind of smile one gives when one can do no better.

Seaver went down to the big mill in the valley and relieved the watchman of the charge of the three powerful boilers. At once he began to heave slabs into the roaring furnaces. The whistle blew, and the great steel band-saw on the second floor of the mill began its daily work of slashing monster logs into boards.

An hour afterward Seaver made a round of the steam-gages and water-gages, saw that everything was going smoothly and turned to the doorway for a breath of fresh air. He noted that the mill foreman stood there eying him solemnly

"What's the matter, Joker?" said Brinkley, advancing a step.

"Matter?" grinned Seaver. "Nothin'! Why?"

"Ye don't look jest right. Ain't sick, are ye?"

"Sick!" laughed Seaver. "Me? Never felt better in my life. Over where I'm from they haf to kill a man to start a graveyard. What made ye think it, Brinkley?"

"All the same," Brinkley muttered, turning toward a balky sawdust-conveyor, "ye don't look jest right. Ye're sort o' green around the eyes."

"Haw-haw-haw!" Seaver roared. "Green around the eyes! Haw-haw-haw!"

He turned his attention once more to the furnaces.

Ten minutes later the mill's roustabout came in. He drew up short before the big fireman and eyed him stolidly.

"What's wrong wi' ye, Joker?" he asked, his voice grave.

"Me?" Joker Joe shrugged his shoulders. "Haw-haw-haw! Nothin' ever was wrong wi' me, Hilton. Why?"

"I dunno," said Hilton, turning away. "But ye're a little pale around the gills, seems to me."

When the roustabout had gone, Joker Joe folded his arms and muttered to himself:

"Green around the eyes! Pale around the gills! I wonder ef I am?"

Seaver had just finished filling the three furnaces again when the engineer entered

the boiler-room. The engineer caught Seaver by a shoulder and turned his sweat-beaded face to the light of the doorway. He gave Joker Joe, a searching look and shook his head half tragically.

"Go and set down, Joker," said he. "Ye don't haf to work when ye're sick, o' course."

Seaver straightened. He threw out his giant chest.

"Sick ——!" he bellowed.

"What's the matter wi' ye, Watson? W'y, I never was sick for a single, lonesome minute in my life!"

"When a man's well," Watson replied easily, "he ain't got no call to be as pyore white as a new dinner plate. The right thing to do would be to send for the doctor, Joker."

"Send for the doctor?" echoed Joker Joe.

"I shore said it. Send for the doctor. A man can be found to take yore place at the b'ilers, Joker. Want me to bring Doc Hoskins?"

Hoskins was the company's doctor. Seaver had played a hundred pranks on the huge, flat-footed physician, and Hoskins was fairly pining to settle the score.

"Dang Doc Hoskins!" exploded Seaver. "I don't need Doc Hoskins. I don't need nothin'. What's gone wrong wi' you, Wat — you and Brinkley and Hilton? Why, I—I cain't be sick. It ain't in me to be sick. I never was sick for a minute in my life, Wat!"

Watson shook his head, gave Seaver a glance that seemed both pitying and sympathetic and went back to the engine-room. Seaver bit his lips, one after the other. Then he felt of his forehead and he felt of his pulse. His pulse was, he had to admit, decidedly too fast, while his forehead was somehow clammy.

"Green around the eyes," he drawled to himself. "Pale around the gills. As white as a new dinner plate. I wisht—I had a lookin'-glass here for jest a minute. I wisht——"

A MASCULINE voice, booming, cut short his soliloquy. He jumped as if somebody had stabbed him with a horse-nettle. There before him stood strapping "Dink" Hanson, his wife's youngest and favorite brother.

"Glad to see ye, Joker, shore!" Hanson said. "I riz afore daylight and got here about a hour ago. Wanted to see how you and Annie was a-makin' it. Brung ye a hick'ry-cyored ham and a middlin'. I—say, Joker, what in the name o' 'Big Bill' Butler's busted baseball bat is the matter wi' you?"

Joker Joe took a step backward. He felt dizzy now. There was a sort of farewell-forever feeling at the pit of his stomach. His hands felt all trembly, and his knees seemed weak. Something kept coming up in his throat and had to be swallowed back.

"Dink," he muttered, "Dink, do I—do I reelly look bad?"

"Look bad!" echoed Dink Hanson. "Joker, ef ye'd been buried for two weeks and 'en dug up, ye'd look no wuss 'an ye look now. Looky here—hadn't I better go for Doc Hoskins and for Annie Belle? Or—or could ye make out to walk home, Joker? Ef I'd he'p ye along, eh?"

"The doctor—Annie Belle—walk ho-ho-home—" stuttered the now almost wholly overcome Joker Joe. "Say, D-Dink, how—how do I look bad?"

"Green around the eyes, pale around the throat and as white as a sheet. That's how. Say, Joe, you got to do somethin' for yeself! I ain't a-goin' to have my sister a widder throwed on the goodness o' the people afore she's been married a month, jest on 'count o' the pyore cussedness o' you! I'm a goin' right now for the doctor, and you got to go home and go to bed, and that's gawspell!"

Joker Joe sank to the boiler-room doorsill, put his elbows on his knees and bent his face, which now seemed clammier than ever, to his hands. Dink Hanson had not taken a dozen steps when he bumped squarely into Hoskins. Hoskins was coming around a corner of the boiler-room.

"Huh!" said Hoskins. "What's the matter, Dinkie, hey?"

"Joker's shore sick!" cried Dink Hanson.

Another half minute and the company's doctor was on his knees before Joe Seaver, who was still sitting in the doorway.

"My heavens!" exclaimed Hoskins as Seaver lifted his troubled face. "It's the same thing that's the matter with Annie Belle! I've just left your house, Joe; I was on my way here to tell you, when I butted slam-bang into Dinkie. It seems that——"

Seaver shot to his feet with all the suddenness of a jack-in-a-box. Hoskins and young Hanson forced him to sit down again.

"You listen to me, Joe," went on Hoskins. "If I save you, I've got to go at it in an intelligent way. I think Annie's out o' danger now, though I can't perzactly tell; but you—my heavens, Dinkie, did ever you see a man look like that before, hey?"

"I shore never!" Hanson answered promptly. "I——"

Joker Joe interrupted;

"Have ye done all ye could do for Annie, Doc—why don't ye talk—what're a standin' there that away for, anyhow? Have ye done all ye could do for Annie, Doc?"

"Sssh!" Hoskins lifted a hand. "Sssh! Let's get at the bottom of the trouble, Joe. The cause, that's it. Joe, did you empty a pepper-shaker before breakfast this morning and fill it with something out of a small pasteboard box?"

"Ground cloves, yeuh," Joker Joe tremulously admitted.

Hoskins nodded.

"Ground cloves; that's what was printed on the outside o' the box, but on the inside —really, I reckon Annie Belle ought o' told you, Joe, about putting rat-pizen in that ground cloves box——"

"Rat-pizen! Rat-pizen!" yelled Joker Joe. Again he leaped to his feet. "Why, I ét some of it, Doc, and it shore tasted jest like ground cloves. Did ye say rat-pizen, Doc?"

"I most certainly did, Joe."

The combined strength of Hoskins and Dink Hanson was finally sufficient to bring Seaver to a sitting posture once more.

"Ca'm yourself now, Joe. We're intelligently at the bottom of the whole unforchunit matter at last. Wait until I shoot this hypodermic into your arm, Joe, and you'll maybe feel a little better. It tasted like ground cloves, Joe, because it had been in a ground cloves box. Don't you see?"

Joker Joe stiffened. His eyes were desperate and yet piteous. Remorse shook the foundations of his soul.

"But Annie!" he said smotheredly, half-brokenly. "Are ye shore Annie'll make it, Doc? Ef only she won't die, I don't keer a dang ef I haf to die twicet——"

"Oh, yes, yes—the chances are that she'll make it, Joe, though maybe she won't." Hoskins was busy with his little syringe. "But she certainly must not be alarmed or worried. We'll have to keep it from her about your being sick too, of course. When I've shot you with this hypo, Joe, you'd better lie down in the sawdust back there in a corner. You'll go to sleep and if you wake up, you'll be all right."

"And if I don't——"

"You won't be all right, if you don't wake up," Hoskins was forced to admit. "But you ain't the man to die until you're dead, Joe."

Seaver took the injection of morphia and then declared his intention of going to Annie Belle or die on the way. Dink Hanson and the doctor offered serious objections and backed them up with four strong hands. Shortly afterward Hoskins and Annie Belle's brother half dragged and half carried the figure of the prank-player to a pile of sawdust in a corner of the boiler-room and soon he sank into the soothing arms of the poppy-god.

WHEN Joker Joe Seaver came to himself again, the long mountain twilight had set in—was mostly over, in fact. The boiler-room was deserted, and steam was down. He sat up, went uncertainly to his feet and walked to the doorway. Not a man was to be seen anywhere; the big mill and its ribbons and disks of steel were silent. Seaver then tried to remember and at last he succeeded. The very second it all came back to him, he hurried toward his small, new cabin on the mountainside above.

When he reached the new split-paling gate, he was well nigh breathless, and his hat was gone. He saw that two men sat on the doorstep, their eyes on the ground at their feet, their countenances rather drawn. He banged the gate open and rushed to them.

"Dink, Doc," he began apprehensively, "how's Annie?"

No answer. The two still stared at the ground at their feet.

"Didn't ye hear me?" Seaver thundered. He seized them, each by a shoulder, and shook them roughly. "How's Annie Belle?"

Doc Hoskins rose. He spat, pinched the end of his nose, pinched his lower lip and then stretched an arm toward the mountain's crest.

"You'll find her up there, Joe," he said sadly. "Poor little Annie!"

Seaver thought he understood, and it was maddening. He ran like a buck to the top of the mountain, a distance of half a mile. When he arrived at the split-paling fence that ran around the little and old, neighborhood cemetery, he vaulted it and began to look for a new mound. Soon he found one. Flowers only slightly wilted were strewn over it. Joker Joe Seaver sank to his knees beside it, there in the gathering dusk, and in a shaken voice cried out for forgiveness for his sin.

And then the erstwhile joker became aware that somebody was approaching him slowly from behind. He sprang erect, expecting to see either Dink Hanson or the company's doctor, and saw instead—his Annie Belle.

"Annie, is it you?" he cried. "Is it you, Annie?"

"Shorely, Joe," smiled his wife. "Shorely. One o' the Shady Creek Morelands was buried here today, Joe, and I walked a little piece with 'em as they went back."

She caught his hand in hers and went on:

"I told Dink about yore jokin' wi' me, and axed him and Doc Hoskins to give you a dose o' yore own medicine, but I told them not to hurt ye in any way; did they? Ef they hurt ye, honey, I'll never even speak to 'em any more."

Joker Joe's two arms reached for her and they got her.

"No, Annie Belle," he answered, and with deep conviction, "they never done anything that I didn't desarve. They was plum nice about it. They never treated me bad in any way."

A Dead Man's Tale

by Gordon Young

Author of "Savages," "Changed," etc.

DEKKER was a good business-man. He had, at the time of his death, been in the South Seas for some twenty-odd years. People who had had close dealings with him said that he would bear watching. He was sharp—which is the commercial euphemism for unscrupulous. People, old-timers, who remembered him in his early days, said that there had been some ugly things whispered about him. But then, said other and more philosophical people, there are always ugly things whispered about every man's past when he succeeds. And who of the South Seas thirty years ago was without sins—commercial and otherwise?

True, Dekker's partner, a man named Weekly, who had had some money and an ambition to own a line of ships, had—well, to put it most suspiciously—disappeared. Dekker and Weekly at that time were sandalwood-traders, and getting out sandalwood was dangerous work. Weekly was killed at Erromango by the natives. Dekker so reported when he returned.

He told Mrs. Weekly that; and she, womanlike, demanded to see the wounds that Dekker had received in defending his friend.

It is usually impossible to argue with a woman—utterly so with a woman of Mrs. Weekly's type. She had a boy baby in her arms and she set about gathering together whatever assets her husband had left. As it was mostly Weekly's money that gave his and Dekker's partnership motive-power, the widow's unreasoning demands embarrassed Dekker. Some people said that he tried to marry her and so get control of the money that way.

However that may be, he did not marry her. She died shortly afterward. There were no heirs but the baby, Clarence. Dekker married and adopted the boy. Some say that he married just so he could adopt the boy—respectably. Others, that he treated the boy as his own child. He had a child, too—a girl, Vila. And he loved her—or seemed to.

Dekker branched out as trader and became ship-owner. He worked hard, and he built up a big and solid business. When he heard of a good man, he went after him. His captains were the best in the South Seas. Ward was the best of these. He had had a hard time getting Ward. Ward had been independent as only sea-captains are. It was in a way impossible to understand why Ward would prefer to stride the poop of a half-freighter, half-trader, bumping from island to island, with an occasional run north to Hongkong and once in a while a long one to San Francisco.

But Ward was famous for his seamanship. Men who had sailed with him sat by the hour on wharves and in groggeries telling what he had done when "she blew the moon out of the sky." Among business men Ward was more famous for his success as a trader and "diplomat" with the natives. He seemed to have a marvelous amount of luck. Anyway, Dekker, whose line of ships were used as much to carry his own trade as that of any other man, was determined to have Ward. And he got him.

He sent young Clarence Weekly to come to terms with that curious old sea-dog; and he had at once showed a liking for the boy and agreed to fly the green-black flag of the South Seas Company.

Ward was a peculiar-looking fellow: a silent little man, with a thick, well-trimmed beard and one eye. Across his forehead and over the blinded eye he wore a black silk handkerchief. But the one eye was sharp and steady. His voice was hard and grating, loud at times when commands were being flung forward and aloft, but as a usual thing he did not talk much. He paced the deck a great deal, looking far away where sky and water met.

II

FOR some time Dekker had not been in the best of health. He was a large-bodied, square-built man, seemingly robust, but he had a bad liver and some other things of which the doctors were apparently unaware. But business was business, and perhaps a sea-voyage would do him good. He decided to make a long trip among the islands and see how things were going. So Vila went on board the *Valance* to keep him company.

Dekker laid in a large stock of good liquor, a package of novels, enough playing-cards for an army post on pay-day—he was continually at solitaire—and was practically carried on board. He was that weak—and drunk. But he wouldn't have a doctor with him. He knew what was the matter with him. Doctors didn't. To —— with them.

Dekker was very nervous and excitable at times. He was especially so when he came on board. He went to his cabin and to bed with orders not to be disturbed. As he took a large dose of laudanum with his whisky it was not likely that he would be.

He had given Captain Ward instructions to put out at two-thirty. The tug appeared on time, but the captain told her to stand off. Dekker was asleep and no one else knew what instructions had been given. At three-thirteen Clarence Weekly, breathless from haste, came dashing up the gangway.

"Why, Clarence," Vila shouted at him joyfully, "father let you come!"

"Must 've changed his mind the last thing. Just got his note a half hour ago. Hurried. No name for it. Whew!"

Clarence was a good-looking boy, though not tall and broad and handsome. But his face had a peculiarly honest quality; also it was forceful. He was a young fellow of energy and eagerness. He had gone to sea early and was a good navigator. Also trader. He liked the work. And he loved Vila.

The tug laid hold of the *Valance* and she edged away. Captain Ward, his arms folded behind him in a kind of Napoleonic fashion, a megaphone dangling about his neck, stood on the bridge, sweeping fore and aft with the solitary burning eye.

"Father's worse," said Vila. "What is the matter with him?"

Clarence hesitated, then abruptly:

"Oh, look! Isn't that pretty."

"Don't! It's more than just sickness, isn't it?" she asked anxiously.

"I don't know what it is, Vila. Worked too hard maybe. He's been awfully absent-minded lately."

"Funny that he changed his mind," she said a little doubtfully.

She knew why her father had not wished her to see much of Clarence during the last six months. And it was more than "funny" or "queer," for Dekker, who denied his daughter but few things, had almost wrathfully told her very recently that she would see no more of Clarence unless she put all idea of loving him out of her head.

The first time—only six months before—he had told her that she should not think of marrying Clarence it was a good deal of a shock to her. For many years they had looked upon themselves as engaged. And it was only of late that Dekker had objected—just before he had been sick and so queer.

Clarence did not have a suspicious

nature. He never suspected the import of Dekker's attitude. As long as he could remember he had regarded Dekker as a father, not a particularly affectionate father, but reasonable, and for almost as long he had regarded Vila as a sweetheart.

Clarence knew the business. He liked it. He worked hard. He made no complaint when Dekker had suggested that he visit this station and that, and was kept much away from home. He had not really thought that he ought to be invited to go on the *Valance*. There was work to be done at the home office. But the note had come telling him to get on board at once.

III

THE next morning Dekker awoke sluggishly and lay quiet for a long while. The soft roll of the ship was restful. He felt pretty good anyway. He was far from that cursed, haunted, home of his. Through the open ports he could whiff the fresh morning sea air. He raised up to glimpse the water, and put his face at the port. It was fine. He was a new man.

He rolled over and reached for the convenient locker where the Scotch was. His hand closed on the bottle and a queer, surprized look came into his eyes, as into those of one who finds something changed about a familiar object.

There was something queer about that bottle. He had grasped the neck and as quickly released the grasp. Then he leaned over the side of the bed and peered.

There was the bottle as he had left it: but around the neck of the bottle was a piece of paper tied with a string.

Dekker burst into a cold sweat and sank back, swearing futilely.

He didn't believe in ghosts. He wouldn't believe in them! It was nonsense. And yet go where he would, do what he could, sooner or later there would be near him, some place, where he was sure to find it, that —— piece of paper. Not the same one—no. He had burned a score of them. He had torn half as many into bits. He had even chewed one in a kind of nervous challenge to the demon that haunted him, and swallowed it. For months the thing had been going on. There was no escape.

The message was not always the same. But it was always something distractingly uncomfortable. And there was no doubt about it being in Weekly's handwriting—the elder Weekly's handwriting. And the elder Weekly was dead. Surely he was dead. Dekker twenty years before had brained him with a war-club from the rear. For nineteen years the dead man had been silent, but for six months now he had written in that queer scrawl that Dekker not only well remembered, but had compared with the old faded letters which Weekly used in his lifetime.

There was no possible earthly means by which that piece of paper could have got into the cabin that night. Dekker had locked the door from the inside. The ship was at sea. And the paper was wrapped and tied around the neck of the bottle of Scotch. Yet Dekker swore, cursing to himself, that the dead were dead; and ghosts—well, ghosts couldn't tie paper around the necks of bottles. He knew it, but he was shaken.

With sudden resolution he tore off the paper and tipped the bottle at his lips, and before he removed it almost a third of the liquor was down his throat. Then, curiosity, or maybe the kind of lure that the fearful has, irresistibly attracted him. He picked the paper up and scanned the message.

You have one chance, Dekker, and only one, to escape hell. Do what you know is right.

WEEKLY.

That was the longest message ever received. Many of them had harped on that thing about doing what is "right"; and the word left Dekker in a kind of doubtful haze as to what was meant. He couldn't bring Weekly back to life. He had often wished that it were possible. But "right"—what the devil could that possibly mean?

He had done nothing wrong in years. Murdered one man—and regretted it. No one could do more than that. He was honest in business. Took what opportunities were offered, of course. But do "right"—did this unresting ghost of Weekly's want him to join a church or something?

"Dead men be ——!" said Dekker with stubborn determination and tipped the Scotch again.

He was not nearly so resolute, so unshaken, so unimpressed as he tried to make himself believe. Then, as often before,

he acted with studied indifference, as if for the benefit of Weekly's ghost, as if aware that spectral eyes were watching. Dekker was no coward in the sense that cowardice is generally used. He was resolute, but cunning. He thought that he had succeeded because he used his head better than other men; and he was very cool, reflective, clear-sighted. At least he told himself that he was.

Having again assured himself that dead men could not possibly annoy the living—he really tried to believe it—he drank further of the Scotch and struck a match to the note.

There was a rap at the door.

"What is it?" Dekker called.

"I heard you up. May I come in?"

Dekker almost jumped from his chair and a frightened expression, as if he had heard a ghost, flashed across his face.

"Who—are—you?" he asked slowly.

Laughter. Then:

"Clarence, of course. I want to thank you."

"God, that voice!" said Dekker to himself.

He had never noticed before how much Clarence's voice was like the father's had been. But what was Clarence doing on board the *Valance?*

He unlocked the door and asked that question so abruptly that the young man was startled.

At that moment a thin, noiseless, dark man, who had evidently been watching for the door to open, slipped up, edged by Weekly and Dekker and went into the cabin, where he began putting things in order.

"Your note—telling me to hurry," said Clarence.

"My note? Telling—you—to—hurry?"

"Yes. Here."

The boy went into his pockets and brought it out.

Dekker looked at it. Certainly it appeared that he had written it.

"Who—how did you get this?"

"Kangivu."

"Kangivu," said Dekker, turning to the lean Malay, "this note—where did you get it?"

"You give him me," said the immobile Malay.

Dekker pressed a hand to his head. It was most uncomfortable. He had taken a good deal to drink before he came on board But his memory—surely that wasn't leaving him? Yet this note was in his handwriting. Or was it?

At one leap Dekker reached a conclusion. Weekly was the ghost. It seemed very plain at that moment. Weekly had bribed the servant and forged the note, thinking that he, Dekker, would have been too drunk to remember whether or not he had written. It was Weekly who tormented him with those ghost notes. And that word "right"—it was an effort at a kind of blackmail into giving Weekly an interest in the business because the father's money had been used.

Perhaps Weekly suspected something of what had happened on Erromango twenty years before. The rough, tough lumberjack sandalwood gang had said some things that caused ugly whispering in Sydney; and perhaps somebody who remembered that had lately been whispering in the boy's ear.

Of course, Dekker never realized that if his conscience had not been guilty his theory would never have been plausible.

"Who's going to look after business?" Dekker asked.

"I thought of that, too."

"Why did you come then?"

"You sent for me. I thought——"

"You thought—you should have known that I was drunk when I wrote it. Now we'll have to turn back and let you off. Tell Captain Ward I want him."

"But you touch at Wellington. I can get a boat back there."

"No. Take too much time. Tell Captain Ward."

THE boy, of course, felt injured and disturbed. He had looked forward to days and nights with Vila; the full soft moon, the fire-besprinkled water, the creaking rigging, and just the two of them together in the shadows. When he went away, Dekker turned to Kangivu.

"I know you lied. I didn't give you that note."

Kangivu looked at him steadily, without expression.

"I'll give you ten pounds to tell me how much he paid you to lie. Weekly didn't pay you that much, did he?"

Kangivu slowly shook his head.

"He pay me no-thin'. You give him me."

If heaven is not full of Malays it won't be because they will fail to convince St. Peter that their lives were spotless. In the matter of lying even the precious Chinaman is as a stumbling, stuttering schoolboy compared to the Malay. He can convince anybody of anything at any time—providing that body does not know that Malays never tell the truth if a lie will serve.

But the odd thing is that, in eighteen months service, Dekker had never known Kangivu to lie once. He was about the leanest, hungriest, most sinister-looking mortal on earth, built like a snake and noiseless as a shadow, but a perfect servant.

"Did I give you that note?" Dekker asked, as though almost convinced.

Kangivu nodded and murmured.

"You're a liar," Dekker said definitely, and turned to his Scotch.

Captain Ward came, half tramping, half shuffling, his body slightly bent but with no appearance of feebleness; and he turned his eye inquiringly on Dekker.

'Come in, captain. Have a drink? Get out, Kang. You recommended him, didn't you?" indicating the departing Kangivu.

"Not I. Not I," said the captain acidly, as was his manner. "Somebody heard you wanted a servant and tole me to tell you o' him."

"That's the way of it. We have to go back, captain, and drop Weekly." And, sampling the Scotch again, he told the captain of the note.

He did not say that he suspected Weekly of having written it, but left that much to be inferred.

"A son of his father, I'm afraid, captain."

The captain's eye rested heavily on Dekker's face as he said—

"Would seem kind o' natural, wouldn't it?"

"You knew Weekly—the father?"

"Never saw his face, sir, or can't say I ever heard much good about him."

"That's it. I've tried to do the right thing by the boy. Treated him like a son. But money missing—accounts short—mix-ups with women. He has been a trial! Imposes on me—like that note."

"Painful," said the captain.

"Has a voice like his father's, too. Hear it sometimes and almost think it's Weekly's ghost talkin'. What do you think about ghosts, captain?"

"Lots."

"Do you believe in 'em?"

"Believe in 'em? Of course I believe in 'em." He spoke as one to whom ghosts are as familiar as bushmen to a hunter.

"You've seen them?" Dekker was serious.

"Seen 'em? I see 'em all the time. Having only one eye it does the work o' two, and is twice as sharp as most people's. Maybe that's why I see things."

Dekker did not quite understand that involved logic, but he nevertheless was much impressed.

"You see them all the time?"

"There was Johns, the boatswain that murdered the cook on the *Mary S. Turner*. I knew he was haunted. I could see it. Long before the ghost pulled him over the rail one stormy night."

"What's that?"

"Yes," said Captain Ward slowly, in a matter-of-fact way, "I saw him."

Dekker was impressed. There was nothing melodramatic about the captain. He spoke almost wearily, as if careless of whether or not he was believed. But underneath the weariness was a tense, convincing quality.

"You believe murderers are — are — haunted?" Dekker demanded.

Captain Ward nodded, his eye steadily, brilliantly fastened on Dekker, who sat across the table from him.

"Yes," said the captain. "I know. Weekly's close as I am to you—and waitin'. Bad thing—to have dead men waitin' like that."

Dekker sprang up and glanced quickly around him. His nerves were jangled. He moved as if trying to catch a glimpse of the horrid spirit before it could vanish.

"It's gone!"

"It hasn't moved," said Captain Ward.

"Are you joking with me?"

"I was never so serious in my life, Dekker. And I'm a serious man."

"Put the *Valance* about! We're going back to Sydney. I have to see a doctor or something. I'm going to get rid of that —— ghost!"

"Easy," the captain said, without moving.

"Easy? How?"

"Do what's right by Weekly's son——"

Dekker was acutely suspicious, also cunning. Now he was half drunk; and moreover he did not believe in ghosts, no matter how much the idea of them might terrify him for a time. He leaped at another conclusion:

"So that's your game, is it! You and that young whelp are partners to blackmail me! You've put him up to leaving those ghost-notes around—and you—you with your one eye can see old Weekly! —— you, Ward, you've guessed wrong. I know what some people said, but I didn't kill Weekly!"

Dekker had made a plausible guess at the truth, and he had clinched it with a statement that would certainly have brought confusion upon blackmailers. Captain Ward did jerk himself up in a surprized way at that; but Dekker did not notice. He continued:

"I'm through with Clarence Weekly. Done with him. I've fed him and clothed him, and educated him. And that's the way he repays me! I've noticed too how chummy you and him have been. I'm surprized at you, Ward. You lose your ship; and —— me, Ward, you'll never get another in the South Seas. As for Weekly—I'll kick him out. Ghosts! Blackmailers! You can't bluff me. My conscience is clear. Understand?"

Captain Ward raised a hand and fumbled at the black cloth around half of his head, and a resolute gleam shot from the solitary eye. But he said nothing. He did nothing. He arose as one who feels the game is about over, and he went out, while Dekker drained the bottle of Scotch and then, with a laugh, a loud triumphant laugh, flung it down.

IV

CAPTAIN WARD and Clarence Weekly were talking. As has been told before, the peculiar little captain liked the boy.

"He said he was going to throw me out?" Clarence asked.

"His words."

"Then I can't marry her. It wouldn't be fair to Vila."

The captain cocked his eye weatherward.

"He has acted strange toward me for the last six months," the boy went on. "I don't understand it. You don't think it possible, captain, that something is wrong—here?" and he touched his head significantly.

"No. Here!" said the captain, and he tapped the left side of his breast. "But women, boy, are strange people. Suppose you tell her—you're to be thrown out—and all. Can't marry her. See what she says."

While Dekker was sitting out the afternoon and evening in his cabin at solitaire and Scotch, and while the *Valance* with her canvas spread before the watchful eye of Captain Ward—who, seamen said, could sail head on at the wind—Clarence told Vila of the ill fortune that had come upon him.

"And you'll go away and never see me again?" she asked.

He made a helpless little gesture: how could a man ask a woman such as she to become the wife, or even remain the sweetheart, of an adventurer in the South Seas? With that recklessness that comes over men when stricken by hard luck, he would reserve nothing. He would cast everything from him. There is a sort of melancholic pleasure, the only one that men can possibly have at such times, in defying hard fortune and voluntarily accepting harder conditions than she—Fortune, moody oracle, is a woman surely—imposes.

"But I thought you loved me!" she said in sweet bitterness.

"Nothing else."

"And maybe I too love nothing else? And you would leave me in a house full of plush furniture just because you haven't those things?"

"Vila!"

"Clarence!"

"But your father——"

"If he ceases to be like a father to you how can I tell how soon he may cease to treat me as his daughter? Oh, Clarence, I have never told you—I just couldn't! But the reason he doesn't want me to marry you is because he wants me to marry some old man back there that has already buried three wives. And I won't. I didn't tell him so—I hate rows—especially when you can't take part in them. And you always can't do anything but listen when father quarrels! That's been six months ago."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"Why haven't you told me things that you are ashamed of?"

"Why I haven't—" Clarence stopped.

"Yes. Haven't you? Is there nothing you're ashamed of—not serious, I mean. But something you just don't want anybody in the world to know?"

And so the conversation edged into lovers' nonsense for a time—as it does whenever a man and maid stand together on the lee of a wind-driven ship just after the sun has gone down and darkness and the stars come together. Then—

"That was six months ago, and you didn't tell me?" he asked reproachfully.

"Father didn't say anything more about it. And since then he has been so strange!"

"Does any one else know?"

"Kangivu—he always listens, I'm sure. I've caught him. But then servants always do. But why should father turn you out? He used to say what a help you were. He's told me himself before now that you could run the business—and you could start one. He doesn't want rivals. Not father."

Clarence laughed as he hugged her to him with a sympathetic gesture that seemed to condone the foolishness of such a suggestion. He spoke of money and the years it takes to build up a business, of the difference in running one that is established and of fighting to make one.

"But mother," she interrupted, "used to say—there were times when she seemed to hate father—she used to say before she died that he had built up his business with your money."

Vila was no longer a daughter: she had become the champion of the man she loved.

"I know. People at one time and another have tried to tell me things like that, too. But I didn't want to hear them. I wouldn't listen."

An hour went by, and they talked on. The subjects veered, but love was at the helm. Deep shadows lay about them. Voices occasionally called back and forth, and now and then the watch rushed to bear a hand in working the ship.

Forgotten was ill fortune. The future had lighted a beacon. Together they would face the world.

"This ring," he said, "was my mother's. Her wedding-ring. I've kept it—always for you. Some day——"

"Why not now?" said a harsh rough voice behind them, a voice that was strained in an unnatural effort at gentleness.

Both wheeled in one movement of surprize and fright.

Captain Ward was there. Like some grotesque being unnaturally summoned—inadvertently summoned—he stood there.

"Yes," he said with that hard unconcerned weariness that marked most of his words, "I've been here—I don't know how long. I've heard. I lose my ship tomorrow, too. But I can marry you now. I'm captain this night out. The ring——"

He held out a commanding hand for it.

Clarence, as one almost hypnotically invoked, held it out.

Captain Ward peered down at it in the darkness. It was as if that marvelous one eye of his made naught of night as—he had said—it made naught of the curtain hung between the living and the dead. His fingers sensitively played about it and for some time he was silent, while they, hand tightly in hand, with the sudden daring of marriage thrilling them, waited.

Captain Ward spoke—

"Kangivu!"

Another shadow emerged from the darkness. The boy and girl felt as if the real world had been displaced by one of Faustian mystery, where shapes were conjured at a word; as if forces of the supernatural were playing about them. The sea, anyway, plays havoc with the theories and stolidity of land-dwellers. No one who has been to sea and known the mysteries of the watery night, the creak and groan of the rolling wooden ship, the snap of rigging and flap of bellied canvas, wonders that sailor-folk are superstitious.

The ocean is primitive, unchanging, eternal. When men go to her breast they go to the old, old sibyl that taught the ancients strange mysterious lore; there is no evading her sorcery, particularly not when one's nerves are strained.

"Kangivu," said Captain Ward, "bring the boatswain."

The boatswain came; and Kangivu and he were witnesses.

Low-voiced the captain spoke, and when he had finished those who had been boy and maid were man and wife. And he placed his hands on their heads and held them there, but he said nothing aloud, though his face was upturned as if pronouncing a benediction.

V

IN CAPTAIN WARD'S cabin Kangivu, glisteningly sleek, motionless as statuary, stood with arms folded.

"You won't need to slip through the port-hole tonight. Dekker is a skeptic in spite of us. But he will believe in ghosts tomorrow. You will have the barrel in the passageway? And the candle? And you will nail up the door?"

At each question Kangivu nodded.

"And this book—" the captain indicated a note-book before him on the desk—"you will take it and do as I told you? There is something more to write yet. But slip it into his suitcase. You will?"

Kangivu nodded.

"And there—on top—" he pointed to a sea-chest—"is money. Don't forget it. It's yours. You can go to your own land and be a prince. But this book—you won't forget? It contains a dead man's tale. He must have it, Kangivu."

"If I fail, I die!" said the immobile Malay with the passionate loyalty of the far and savage East.

"And we'll drop anchor where it suits us. The harbor-master may have a fit—but it won't last long. Everybody must be off as soon as the hook is down. I'll see to that."

When Kangivu was gone, Captain Ward bent to the book in which he had been writing. He brushed aside some scraps of paper. On them was written the identical message which had purported to come from Dekker in summoning Clarence at the last moment on board the *Valance*. These scraps were experiments in forgery of Dekker's writing.

VI

WHAT remains may be briefly told.

Dekker awoke late the next morning from a heavily drunken sleep, but he awoke with a feeling of elation. He knew he had hoodwinked the ghost. He had locked not only the door, but the ports. At solitaire he had figured it all out. Kangivu had been bribed to place those ghost messages. Kangivu, lowered over the side, could have come like an eel through the port. It was very simple. He had drunk to celebrate his discovery, and slept the intense sleep of the bottle-solaced.

For a time he lay awake without moving, without raising up. Then he noticed that the ship was rolling idly on the harbor swells. And he smiled. He would fix those blackmailers. He reached for the bottle. No ghost note was about it this time.

He raised up to drink.

The bottle fell from his hand. His eyes started from under the deep sockets and terror blanched his face. Nerveless he shrank back and a trembling, furtive hand crept underneath his pillow and closed on the handle of a revolver, while he continued to stare, stare madly, before him.

There—motionless—silent—at the foot of his bed stood Weekly. Weekly, whom he had murdered twenty years before at Erromanga. The hideous cavity in his skull where the club had struck, breaking the forehead and gouging an eye from its socket, was exposed. The smooth, freshly-shaven face disclosed the features—aged much, but undeniably the same—of Weekly himself.

Dekker, breathing hard, flashed his eyes unbelievingly at the closed ports, at the closed door. He had no way of knowing that the artful Kangivu had tampered with the lock the previous evening when he brought in the supper. To Dekker it seemed this apparition had come, as the ghosts of murdered men were said to come, through solid walls.

"Who—who—who are you?" He stammered the inevitable question of the terror-stricken.

No answer: a slow hand raised itself and touched the pale side of the battered forehead.

Then came the sound of the pounding at the cabin door.

Dekker cried out. He cried out to come in, to batter the door down, to break in, for God's sake to break in!

But the hammering went on. Kangivu was nailing the cabin door fast. He quickly finished.

There was silence while Dekker continued to stare hopefully, fearfully at the door.

Then, had his ears been more acute, he might have heard the scrape and pop of a match; and had they been supernaturally sensitive, a minute later he might have heard the splash of a body as the amphibious Malay took to the water and swam rapidly away. His was not to question the will of the white man who had done him those favors that bind at times the men of the Orient to those of the West in a blood-brotherhood. Kangivu understood vengeance as it is understood only in the Far, Far East.

Dekker leaped from his bed and threw himself against the door. It was fast. He raised the gun and stared, crouching, at the silent form.

It was flesh. He knew it. He saw through the whole thing. The bandage gone and the beard shaved—and Weekly!

Dekker laughed nervelessly but defiantly, and, raising his left hand, steadied the right, the hand that held the gun.

"I'm going to kill you—this time!"

He said it slowly, scarcely conscious of speaking aloud. It was merely the thought that hammered at his brain.

"You've had your chance, Dekker."

And Dekker knew—how or why, it would be difficult to say, but he knew to what this half-ghost referred.

"I was a dead man. If you had done right by the boy—I would have let you alone. But I watched you. I hired your servant to go away so Kangivu could have his place. I warned you again and again. But you wouldn't believe in ghosts. Last night I married them—she is your only heir, My boy is her husband. You and me. Dekker—we're goin' out of this world and have it over with. I believe God gets impatient at times waitin' to judge men like you and me. Go on. Pull the trigger if you want me to go first—but there's a barrel of powder out there and an inch candle burning a-top of it!"

Slavery Among the Indians

By Hugh Pendexter

SLAVERY as an institution did not generally exist among the North American Indians. But on the West Coast, from the Tlingits on Controller Bay as far south as California, it did prevail. The Tlingits' northern neighbors, the Eskimos, knew nothing about it. The Cherokee and other southern tribes soon learned the value of slaves after the white men came, as many negroes ran away from the plantations and joined the Indians. Some of these were taken into the tribe, others were sold back to their masters.

What has often been mistaken for slavery was the Indians' form of adoption. Believing the family, clan and tribe gained magic strength through the birth-rate, and lost through the death-rate, it was customary to keep the balance at least even by adopting aliens, white as well as red, to take the place of the lost. It was not a matter of sentiment, but simply the law of self-preservation.

To offset a heavy loss of magic power through a high death-rate, a tribe would send out parties of warriors, who were to bring back women and children. These prisoners were adopted. The fierce and cruel Iroquois adopted whole sections of tribes after destroying them as a people.

Both French and English were accustomed to secure the prisoners held by the Indians and then sell them to white settlers. The enslavement of negroes and Pawnee Indians was recognized by Canada in 1709.

Commanche, Apache and Kiowa stole many men, women and children in their raids into Mexico and adopted many of them. The missionary influence was exerted to prevent torture, cannibalism and death, by inducing the savage captors to retain their prisoners as slaves. Ordinarily, however, a prisoner thus spared was ultimately adopted and ranked with those born in the tribe.

Europeans, however, made a practise of capturing and selling Indians to Cuba and other ports as slaves. Tuscarora Indians, captured by the wholesale, were sold into slavery. They were advertised in the Boston *News Letter* for sale. Three slave expeditions were sent against the South Carolina Indians between 1702 and 1708.

Massachusetts turned a pretty penny by disposing of the surviving Pequots as slaves in the West Indies.

Despite the mingling of negroes with the southern tribes and the attitude of the whites toward the aborigines, there is no proof that the Indians acquired the habit from the whites. Even in the northwest coast tribes, where slavery was recognized as an institution, the status of the slave was not unlike that of a prisoner spared by the eastern tribes. He had to do menial work, much as an Iroquois prisoner would do until he had given proof of warrior-like qualities. If a coast slave could acquire property, he could buy his freedom. Often he was declared a free man and could marry into the tribe.

MAN TO MAN

A Four-Part Story
PART III

by JACKSON GREGORY

Author of "Silver Slippers," "The Bells of San Juan," etc.

The first part of this story briefly retold in story form.

ON THE trail toward Packard's Grab, Steve Packard, rising in his stirrups, saw a girl in a red cloak standing perilously near the sheer bank of a lake just off the trail. Then, suddenly. he heard a low cry and saw that the girl had disappeared.

It was only a few moments later when Steve rose to the surface of the lake with the girl struggling in his arms, and then he saw for the first time that she wore a bathing suit and that anger was blazing in her eyes.

"You're about the freshest proposition I ever came across," she said, finally finding words to express her indignation.

After the girl had told at great length her opinion of Packard for interrupting her swim, she gave him another surprize, for he discovered she had come to the lake in a high-powered touring car.

Surely, he thought, the country had changed during the twelve years he had wandered about the four corners of the earth.

But when she tried to start the car, Packard found a way of avenging his shattered pride, for the car would not start, and she was finally forced to ask him for help, which he was able to give.

Stopping later at a rather dilapidated ranch-house, Steve asked for food and lodging for the night. A person who gave the appearance of having at one time been a real man, opened the door. He invited Steve in and called to "Terry" to get food for the stranger.

"If he's hungry, let him forage for himself," came the answer, and Steve discovered that Terry was the girl of the red automobile.

From Terry Temple he heard much about Ranch Number Ten where he had been brought up. His father had died, leaving the ranch heavily mortgaged to "Hell-fire" Packard, Steve's grandfather. That man, whom Terry described as being "so low-down mean that the devil himself wouldn't have him," was now running the ranch and considered himself practically the owner. Bill Royce, the ranch's former manager, who had taught Steve all he knew about riding and shooting, was now blind, and in his place was Blenham, Hell-fire Packard's trusted man.

When Terry finally discovered that Steve was a Packard she swept out of the room, slamming the door behind her.

At Ranch Number Ten, Steve found a fight just ending. Barbee, one of the men, was lying on the floor, his face swollen, swearing vengeance on Blenham. Bill Royce, the blind ex-manager, was there too.

"You're fired, Blenham," said Steve sharply.

"Who the —— are you?"

When Steve disclosed his identity, Bill Royce gasped, as did many of the others, and Blenham sneered, but not for long, for he found no sympathy among the ranchers.

That night Steve learned many things from the blind Bill Royce.

Steve's father, the day before his death, had entrusted Royce, not blind then, with ten thousand dollars, charging the manager to keep the money for his son. Royce had hidden it in the foundations of the ranch-house.

That same night the ranchers had decided to play a trick on one of their number, Johnny Mills, who was very fond of quail hunting and who boasted he never missed a shot. The boys had drawn the shot from his gun, leaving only the powder. Royce, on his way to the McKittrick place where Mills did his hunting, near Ranch Number Ten, had received both barrels from an uncharged shotgun squarely in the face.

"That's how my lights went out, Steve."

"Know who did it Bill?" asked Steve.

"If I knew—for sure—I'd get him! Whoever it was, he thought I had the money on me, but come with me Steve, and we'll get it now. I looked last Saturday night to make sure it was there."

They found the wallet, and, back in the house, Steve opened it. It contained—not ten one-thousand-dollar bills—but ten one-dollar bills.

Steve controlled his feelings and, looking into the blind eyes of Royce, assured him that the money was all there.

The next morning, out of Bird Cañon, whizzed a glistening automobile, making at break-neck speed for Ranch Number Ten. Steve at first thought of Terry but, as the car drew up, he saw his grandfather, a man of over six feet, straight as a ramrod and with a chest as powerful as a blacksmith's bellows.

The interview between the two was very short and to the point. Hell-fire Packard wanted his grandson to take Blenham back and fire Barbee, whom Steve had appointed foreman. Steve refused, and the old man raged, swearing that inside a year he would own the ranch and informing Steve that the amount of the mortgages he held was fifty thousand dollars.

Steve replied that he possessed in all seventy-five, and the old man left in a rage.

At the little town of Red Creek, which was really two separate towns—half Packard, half opposition—Steve discovered that Blenham had collected ten one-dollar bills the previous Saturday night. The ten he had found in the wallet, Steve left with Hodges, the proprietor of the Ace of Diamonds, the saloon patronized by the Packard faction, telling Hodges to turn the money over to Blenham and tell him that Steve Packard had found it.

LATER next evening Steve decided to return to the Ace of Diamonds. Blenham was there and looked very worried.

"Get the money I gave Hodges for you?" asked Steve.

Blenham looked guilty despite his denial, and Packard felt certain that his hunch had been correct. He was sure of it a few minutes later when Blenham hurriedly left and, moreover, he believed that the foreman had not yet taken the money away from Ranch Number Ten; it was hidden there somewhere, he felt sure.

Steve, although he had ordered Barbee to watch for Blenham that night, decided to follow but soon found that Blenham had left orders that he was to be kept in town. Joe Woods who, under Blenham's orders, was cutting timber on Ranch Number Ten, tried to start a fight with Steve and succeeded, though he soon wished he hadn't.

"I'll see you in the morning, Woods," panted Steve as he started to go.

But Steve found that others were ready to carry on the fight. Woods, however, interrupted—

"I fought him fair and he licked me."

"Blenham said ——" screamed Hodges.

"—— Blenham! Let him go!"

Outside, Steve found his horse gone. At the Old Trusty Saloon across the street he finally succeeded in getting another.

Part way to the ranch, riding through a splotch of moonlight, a shot sounded and Steve's horse dropped.

Hopeless of getting back in time, Steve, however, set out to walk. Then he heard a low throbbing in the distance and turned to see the head lights of a motor-car coming down the trail.

Terry Temple did not stop, but Steve made a leap and succeeded in landing on the running-board. At the ranch, however, she increased her speed and only Steve's threat to shoot holes in the tires finally made her slow down the car.

At the ranch house Barbee had Blenham covered, and the latter was offering a bribe of one of ten one-thousand-dollar bills if Barbee would let him go. Steve entered without waiting for the young foreman's reply.

After Steve had collected the money he called Bill Royce from the ranch-house, told him what had happened and stated that Blenham had been the one who had blinded him.

There Royce had his revenge. Steve put out the lights, guarded the door and in the darkness the blind man and the one who had blinded him fought it out.

When Steve lit the lights again he found that through an accident Blenham had received more punishment than the terrible beating Royce had given him. A long-roweled Mexican spur that had been hanging on the wall had been knocked down, and the spur had taken out one of Blenham's eyes.

The next morning Steve kept his appointment with Woods and found Blenham there. Steve ordered Woods and all his men to leave the ranch immediately. Woods swore he would take orders only from Blenham and reached for his gun. Steve got it away from him, however, and covering the outfit saw them all, including Blenham, loaded into a wagon and himself escorted them beyond the boundaries of Ranch Number Ten and past the Temple ranch.

Through field-glasses, Terry Temple saw them coming.

"Steve Packard!" she exclaimed, half to herself, "I believe you're a white man after all!"

But when Steve, after seeing the wagon out of sight, returned to say "good morning" to Terry Temple, she merely looked at him coldly and went into the house.

CHAPTER XIII

IN a short time the cattle country had come to know a good deal of Steve Packard, son of the late Philip Packard, grandson of "Old Man" Packard, variously known. Red Creek gossiped within its limits and sent forth word of a quarrel of some sort with Blenham, a winning game of seven-and-a-half and a fight with big Joe Woods. Red Creek was inclined to set the seal of approval on this new Packard, for Red Creek, on both sides of its quarrelsome street, stood ready to say that a man was a man even when it might go gunning for him.

As the days went by, Packard's fame grew. There were tales that in a savage mêlée with Blenham he had eliminated that capable individual's right eye; and, though there were those who had had it from some of the Ranch Number Ten boys that Blenham's loss was the result of an accident,

still it remained unquestioned that Blenham had suffered injury at Packard's ranch and had been driven forth from it.

Then, Packard had followed Blenham to the logging-camp; he had tackled the crowd headed by Joe Woods; he had come remarkably close to killing Woods; he had broken up the camp and sent the timber-jacks on their way. He had had a horse killed under him; he had quarreled with his grandfather; he was standing on his own feet. In brief—

"He's a sure enough, out an' out Packard!" they said of him.

To be sure, while there were men who spoke well of him, there were others, perhaps as many, who spoke ill. There was the barkeeper of the Ace of Diamonds, Joe Woods, Blenham; they had their friends and hangers-on. On the other hand, offsetting these, there were old friends whom Steve had not seen for twelve or more years.

Such was Brocky Lane whose cowboy had loaned Steve the horse which had been killed on the Red Creek road. Young Packard promptly paid for the animal and resumed auld lang syne with the hearty, generous Brocky Lane.

What men had to say of him came last of all to Steve. But some fifty miles to the north of Ranch Number Ten, on the far-flung acres of the biggest stock-ranch in the State, there was another Packard to whom rumors came swiftly. And this was because the old grandfather went far out of his way upon every opportunity to learn of his grandson's activities.

"What for a man is he growed up to be, any how?" was what Hell-fire Packard was interested in ascertaining.

When the old man wanted to get anywhere he ordered out his car and Guy Little. When he wanted information he sent for Guy Little. The undersized mechanician was gifted with eyes which could see, ears which could hear and a tongue which could set matters clear; he must have been unusually keen to have retained his position in the old man's household for the matter of five or six years.

To his employer he had come once upon a time, half-starved and weary, a look of dread in his eyes which had the way of turning swiftly over his shoulder; the old man had had from the beginning the more than suspicion that the little fellow was a fugitive from the law.

He had immediately taken him in and given him succor and comfort. The poor devil fumbled for a name and was so obviously making himself a new one that Packard dubbed him Guy Little on the spot, simply because, he explained, he was such a little guy. And thereafter the two grew in friendship.

Guy Little's first coming had been opportune. The old man had only recently bought his first touring-car; in haste to be gone somewhere his motor failed to respond to his first coaxing and subsequent bursts of violent rage. While he was cursing it, reviling it, shaking his fist at it and vowing he'd set a keg of giant powder under the thing and blow it clean to blue blazes, Guy Little ran a loving hand over it, stroked its mane, so to speak, whispered in its ear and set the engine purring. Old Man Packard nodded; they two, big-bodied millionaire and dwarfed waif, needed each other.

"Climb on the runnin'-board, Guy Little," he said right then. "You go wherever I go." And later he came to say of his mechanician, "Him? Why, man, he can take four ol' wagon wheels an' a can of gasoline an' make the —— thing go. He's all automobile brains, that's what Guy Little is!"

On the Big Bend ranch, the old man's largest and favorite of several kindred holdings, an outfit which flung its twenty thousand acres this way and that among the Little Hills and on either side of the upper waters of the stream which eventually gave its name to Red Creek, the oldest of the name of Packard had summoned Guy Little.

It was some ten days after the stopping of all activity in the Ranch Number Ten lumber-camp. He had been sitting alone in his library, smoking a pipe and staring out of his window and across his fields. Suddenly he sprang to his feet, went to his door and shouted down the long hall:

"Ho, there! Guy Little!"

The house was big; rooms had been added now and then at intervals during the last thirty or forty years; the master's library was of generous dimensions and could have stabled a herd of fifty horses. This chamber was in the southwest corner of the rambling edifice; Guy Little's quarters were diagonally across the building. But Packard asked no tinkling electric bell; as usual he was content to stick his head out into the hall and yell in that big, booming voice of his:

"Ho, there! Guy Little, come here!"

Having voiced his command he went back to his deep leather chair and refilled his pipe. It was the time of early dusk; not yet were the coal-oil lamps lighted; shadows were lengthening and merging, out in the rolling fields. Packard's eyes, withdrawn from the outdoors, wandered along his tall and seldom-used book-shelves, fell to the one worn volume on the table beside him, went hastily to the door. Down the hall came the sound of quick footsteps. He took up the single volume and thrust it out of sight under the leather cushion of his chair. The mechanician was in the room before he could get his pipe lighted.

"You called, m'lord?"

Guy Little stood drawn up to make the most of his very inconsiderable height, eyes straight ahead, hands at sides, chin elevated and stationary. Nothing was plainer than that he aped the burlesqued English butler—unless it be that it was even more obvious that in his chosen rôle he was a ridiculous failure. There never was a man less designed by nature for the part than Guy Little.

And yet he insisted; in the beginning of his relationship with his employer, his soul swelling with gratitude, his imagination touched by the splendors into which his fate had led him, awed by the dominant Packard, he had wanted always, upon an occasion like this, to demand stiffly—

"You rang, your majesty?"

Packard had cursed and threatened and browbeat him down to—

"You called, m'lord?"

But not even old Hell-fire Packard could get him any further.

"Yes, I called," grunted the old man. "I hollered my head off at you. I want to know what you foun' out. Let's have it."

Guy Little made his little butler-bow.

"Your word is law, m'lord," he said, once more rigid and unbending.

Although Packard knew this very well without being told and had known it a good many years before Guy Little had been born, and although Guy Little had repeated the phrase time without number, the old man accepted it peacefully as a necessary though utterly damnable introduction.

"It's like this," continued the mechanician. "Not knowin' what you thought an' not even knowin' what you wanted to think, an' figgerin' to play safe, I've picked up the dope all over. Which is sayin' I bought drinks on both sides the street, whisky at Whitey Wimble's joint an' more of the same at Dan Hodges. An' I foun' out several things, m'lord. If it is your wish——"

"Spit 'em out, Guy Little! What for a man is he?"

"FIRS'," said Guy Little, shifting his feet the fraction of an inch so that his chin bore directly upon Packard, "he's a scrapper. He beat up Joe Woods, a bigger man than him; later he took part in some sort of a party durin' which, like is beknown to you, somebody gouged Blenham's eye out; after that, single-handed, he cleaned out your lumber-camp, fifteen men countin' Blenham. Tally one, he's a scrapper."

For an instant it seemed that all of the light there was in the swiftly darkening room had centered in the blue eyes under the old man's bushy white brows. He drew deeply upon his pipe.

"Go on, Guy Little," he ordered. "What more? Spit it out, man."

"Nex'," reported the little man, "he's a born gambler. If he wasn't, he wouldn't of tied into a game of buckin' you; he wouldn't of played seven-an-a-half like he did in at the Ace of Diamonds; he wouldn't of took them long chances tacklin' Woodsy's timberjacks before breakfas'. Scrapper an' gambler. That's tally one an' two."

The old man frowned heavily, his teeth remaining tight clamped on his pipe-stem as he cried sharply:

"That's it! You've said it: gambler! —— the boy, I knowed he had it in his blood. An' it'll ruin him, ruin him, Guy Little, as it would ruin any man. We got to get that —— gamblin' spirit outn' him. A man that's always takin' chances never gets anywhere; take a chance an' you ain't got a chance! That's the way of it, Guy Little! Go on, though. What else about him?"

"He's a good sport," went on the news-gatherer, "an' he don't ask no help from nobody. He stan's on his two feet like a man, m'lord. When he sees a row ahead he don't go to the law with it; no, m'lord; no indeed, m'lord. He says '—— with the law!' like a man would, like me an' you—an' he kills his own rats himself."

"That's the Packard of him. For, by ——, Guy Little, he is a Packard even if he has got a wrong start! Rich man's son—silver-spoon stuff—why, it would spoil a better man than you ever saw! Didn't I spoil my son Phil that-a-way? Didn't Phil start out spoilin' his son Stephen that same way? But he's a Packard—an'—an'——"

"An' what, m'lord?"

The old man's fist fell heavily on the arm of his chair.

"An' I'm still hopin' he's goin' to be a —— good Packard at that! But you go on, Guy Little. What else?"

"Sort o' reckless, he is," resumed Guy Little. "But that's purty near the same thing as havin' the gamblin' spirit, ain't it? Nex' an' final, m'lord, he's got what you might call an eye for a good-lookin' girl."

"The devil you say, Guy Little!" The old man, beginning to settle in his chair, sat bolt upright. "Is some female woman tryin' to get her hooks in my gran'son already? Name her to me, sir!"

"Name of Temple," said Little. "Terry Temple as they call her, an' a sure good-lookin' party, if you ask me. Classy from eyes to ankles, an' when it comes to——"

"—— it, Guy Little!" exploded Old Man Packard, leaping to his feet, towering high above the little man who looked up at him with an earnest and placid expression. "That wench, that she-devil, that Jezebel! Settin' her traps for my boy Stephen, is she? Why, man alive, she ain't fit to scrape the corral-mud off'n his boots. She's a lyin', deceitful —— jade, that's what she is, sired by a sheep-stealin', throat-cuttin', ornery, no-'count, worthless cuss! The whole pack of them Temples, he an' she of 'em, big an' little of 'em, ought to be strung up on the firs' tree! The low-down bunch of little prairie dawgs, tryin' to trap a Packard with puttin' a putty-faced fool girl in their snare. I say, Guy Little, I'll make the whole crowd of 'em hunt their holes!"

And he hurled his pipe from him so that it broke into many pieces on the hearthstone.

Now that was a long speech for Old Man Packard, and Guy Little listened interestedly. At the end, when the old man went growling back to his chair, the mechanician took up his tale.

"She's purty though," he maintained. "Like a picture!"

"Doll-faced," snorted the old man who had not the least idea what Terry Temple looked like, not having laid his eyes on her for the matter of years. "Dumpy, pudgy, squidge-nosed little fool. I'll run both her and her thief of a father out of the country."

"An'," continued Guy Little, "I didn't exac'ly say, m'lord, as how this Terry Temple party was after him. I said as how he was after her. That is, as how, roundin' out what I know about him, he's got a eye for a fine lookin' lady. Which, against argyment, I maintain that Terry Temple girl is."

"Guy Little," cried Packard sharply, "you're a fool! Maybe you know all there is about motor-cars an' gasoline. When it comes to females you're a fool."

"Ah, m'lord, not so!" protested Guy Little, a gleam in his eye like a faint flicker from a dead fire. "There was a time—before I set these hoofs of mine into the wanderin' trail—when——"

The rest might best be left entirely to the imagination and there he left it. But the old man was all untouched by his henchman's utterance and innuendoed boast, for the simple reason that he had heard nothing of it.

"Those Temple hounds," he muttered, staring at Guy Little who stared butlerishly back, "are leaches, parasites, cursed bloodsuckers and hangers-on. They think I'm goin' to take this boy in an' give him all I got; they think they see a chance to marry him into their rotten crowd an' slip one over on me this way! That simperin', gigglin' fool of a girl try an' hook my gran'son! I'll show 'em, Guy Little; I'll show the whole cussed pack of 'em! I'll exterminate 'em, root an' branch an' withered leaf! By the Lord, but I'll go get 'em!"

"He'll do it," nodded Guy Little, addressing the invisible third party in order not to directly interrupt his patron's flow of words.

But for a little the old man was silent, running his calloused fingers nervously through his beard, frowning into the dusk thickening over the world outside. When he spoke again it was softly, thoughtfully, almost tenderly. And the words were these:

"Break a fool an' make a man, Guy Little! That's what we're goin' to do for Stephen Packard. He's always had too much money, had life too easy. We'll jus'

nacherally bust him all to pieces; we'll learn him the big lesson of life; we'll make a man out'n him yet. An' when that's done, Guy Little, when that time comes—Go send Blenham here!" he broke off with sharp abruptness.

Guy Little achieved his stage bow and departed. The door only half-closed behind him; he was shouting at the top of his voice:

"Hey, Blenham! Oh, Blenham! On the jump. Packard wants you!"

The door slammed behind him. His back once turned on "m'lord" Guy Little did not wait to get out of earshot to become less butler than human sparrow.

Blenham needed but the one summons and that might almost have been whispered. He was fidgeting in his own room, waiting for this moment, knowing that he was to receive definite instructions concerning Stephen Packard. Over his right eye was a patch; his face still wore a sickly pallor; his one good eye burned with a sullen flame which never went out.

Guy Little was the one human being in the world with whom the old man talked freely, to whom he unburdened himself. With his chief lieutenant, Blenham, he was, as with other men, short, crisp-worded, curt. Now, seeming to take no stock of Blenham's disfigurement, in a dozen snapping sentences he issued his orders.

Their gist was plain. Blenham was to go the limit to accomplish two purposes: the minor one, to make the world a dreary place for certain scoundrels, name of Temple; the major one, to utterly break Steve Packard. When Blenham went out and to his own room again the sullen fire in his good eye burned more brightly, as though with fresh fuel.

A little later Guy Little returned, lighted the lamps, made a small fire in the big fireplace and, ignoring the presence of his master, went to stand in front of the high bookshelves. After a long time he got the stepladder and placed it; climbed to the top and squatted there in front of his favorite section. Ultimately he drew down a volume with many colored illustrations; it was a tale of love, its *mise en scène*, the mansions of the lords and ladies whose adventures occurred in that atmosphere of romance which had captivated the soul of Guy Little.

When he climbed down and sought the big chair in which he would curl up to read and chew countless sticks of gum, chewing fast when the action hurried, slowly when there was a dramatic pause, stopping often with mouth wide open when tense and breathless interest held him, he discovered that the old man had gone out.

Guy Little pursed his lips. Then he went to the recently vacated leather chair, not to sit in it, merely to draw out the little volume from under the cushion.

"'Lyrics from Tennyson,'" he read aloud. "What the devil are them things?"

He turned the pages.

"Pomes!" he grunted in disgust.

Whereupon he carried his own book to his own chair. But, beginning to turn the pages, he stopped and looked up wonderingly.

"Funny ol' duck," he mused. "Here I've knowed him all these years an' I never guessed he read pomes!"

He shook his head, admitted to himself that the "ol' duck was a keen ol' cuss," returned to his book, began stripping the paper from the first stick of gum and knew no more of what went on about him.

CHAPTER XIV

SINCE the hill ranch operated by the Temples and the Packard Ranch Number Ten had over two miles of common border-line, it was unavoidable that Steve and Terry should meet frequently. Truly unavoidable since, further, they were both young, Terry as pretty as the proverbial picture, Steve the type to stick somehow in such a girl's mind. She turned up her nose at him; she gave him a fine view of her back; but, in riding her father's range, she let her eyes travel curiously across the line.

For his part Steve, seeing where some of his calves had invaded Temple property, followed the errant calves himself instead of sending one of his men. And, as he rode, he was apt to forget his strayed cattle as he watched through the trees for a fluttering, gay-hued scarf.

Certainly, of the girls and women he had known, she was the most refreshing; certainly she was the prettiest, after an undeniably saucy style. And life here of late, with Blenham and Woods gone and unheard from, was a quiet, uneventful affair.

Terry, for her part, told herself and any one else who cared to listen, that he was a

Packard, hence to be distrusted, avoided, considered as beneath a white person's notice. His breed were all crooked; sired and grandsired by precious scoundrels, he was but what was to be expected. And yet . . .

For "yets" and "ifs" and "howevers" had already begun to intrude, befogging many a consideration hitherto clear as cut-glass. He had not lied about a horse being shot under him; he had been party to Blenham's departure from the ranch; he had been man enough in Red Creek to whip Joe Woods, and, single-handed, he had driven a crew of rough-and-ready timberjacks off his property.

Further, it was undeniable that he had a good-natured grin, that his eyes, though inclined either to be stern or else to laugh at her, were frank and steady, that he made a figure that fitted well in the eye of a girl like Terry Temple.

"Oh, the Packards are men," said Terry begrudgingly, "even if they are pirates!"

This to her father and, it is to be suspected, for her father's sake. For, despite the girl's valiantly repeated hope that Temple would come back yet and be again the man he once was, he seemed in fact to grow more shiftless day after day, communing long over his fireplace with his drink, passing from one degree to another of untidiness. He made her feel like screaming and running around the house breaking things, at times.

"You are impatient, my dear," said Temple, as one speaking to a very young child. "And there are matters which you don't understand, which I can not even discuss with you. But," and he winked very slyly, less at Terry than just in a general acknowledgment of his own acumen, "you just wait a spell! I've got somethin' up my sleeve—somethin' that— Oh, you just wait, my dear!"

Terry sniffed.

"I ought to be pretty good at waiting by now," she told him, little impressed. "And if you have anything up your sleeve besides the flabby arm of a do-nothing, then it must be another bottle of whisky! You can't flim-flam me, dad, and you ought to know it."

She whisked out of the house, her face reddened with vexation, a sudden moisture in her eyes. It took all of the fortitude she could summon into her dauntless little bosom to maintain after days like this that there was still a come-back left in her father.

In an hour made fragrant by the resinous odors of the upland pines and the freshly liberated perfumes of the little white evening flowers thick in the meadows, Terry, on her favorite horse went flashing through the long shadows of the late afternoon, riding as Terry always rode when her breast was tumultuous and her temper rising.

The recently imported Japanese cook and house-boy peered out after her from his kitchen-window, his eyes actually losing their Oriental cast and growing round—a trick of Iki's whenever Terry came into his view.

"Part bird," mused Iki, "part flower, big part wild devil-girl! Oof! Nice to look at, but for wife, Japanee girl more better. Think so."

Little by little as she rode, letting her horse out until she fairly raced through the fields and into the woods beyond, the pitiful picture of her father faded from her mind. As the vision of Temple's shoddiness in his worn-out slippers dimmed, another image formed in Terry's mind; an image which was there more than the girl had as yet come to realize.

Yes, as types, the Packards were all right; how many times had she admitted that to herself! But, as individuals . . . Oh, how she hated them! And today, for some reason not clearly defined in Terry's consciousness, she found it convenient to assure herself with new emphasis that she hated and despised the Packards with a growing detestation, and from this point to go on and inform Miss Teresa Temple exactly why she looked on those of the Packard blood just as she did.

She summoned a host of reasons, set them in ranks like so many soldiers to wage war for her, marshaled and deployed and reviewed and dress-paraded them and found them all eminently satisfactory mercenaries.

There was one reason which she thrust into the background, seeking to keep it hidden behind the serried ranks of its brothers-in-arms. And yet it insisted in mutinous fashion in pushing to the fore. Seeking to consider the Packards *en masse*, as a curse rather than as individuals, she found that she was remembering Steve Packard rather vividly.

In the outward seeming, Steve Packard

was a gentleman; he had that vague something called culture; he bore himself with the assurance and ease of one who knew the world; he had been to college—and Terry knew nothing more of school than a country high school. Steve's father had broken her father financially; had such not been the fact Terry herself would have had her own college diploma on her wall. Terry would have known something more of the world than she now knew; she would have been "a lady."

"Oh, pickles!" cried Terry aloud, bringing her runaway thoughts to a sharp halt. "What difference does it make if he knows Latin and I don't? And a hot specimen of a 'lady' I'd make anyhow!"

Over a ridge she flew, the low sun glistening from her spurs and the polished surfaces of her boot-tops, down into the dusk-filled fragrance of a woodsy cañon, into the mouth of a silent trail, around a wide curve and to her own favorite spot of all these woods—a nook of haunting charm with its sprawling stream, its big-boled and widely scattered trees, its grass and flowers. "Mossy Dell," she called it, having borrowed the name from an old romance read in breathless fashion in her room.

Slipping out of her saddle and leaving her horse to browse, if such pastime suited him, Terry went through the trees and down along the flashing creek, humming softly, her voice confused with the gurgle of the noisy little stream, her eyes at last growing content.

She was half-smiling at some shadowy thought before she had gone twenty paces; she tossed off her hat and let it lie, meaning to come back for it later; she unfastened the scarf about her neck, baring her white throat to the hour's cool invitation; she let her bronze-brown hair down in two loose, curling braids across her shoulders, toying with the ends as she went.

Coming here at troubled moments altered the girl's mood very much as an hour in a quiet cathedral may soothe the soul of the orthodox.

A little further on, lying across the stream and just around another bend, was a great fallen cedar, its giant trunk eight or ten feet through at the base. Approximately it marked the border-line between the Temple Ranch and Ranch Number Ten; it was quite as though the wilderness itself had cast down the big tree across an old trail to indicate a line which must not be crossed.

Upon the top of this supine woodland monarch, Terry was accustomed to sit, her back against one of the big limbs, her heels kicking at the mossy sides while she glanced back and forth from Temple property to Packard land and told herself how much finer was her side than the other.

JUST where the tree had fallen, the creek-bed was rocky and uneven; the water eddied and whirled and plunged noisily into its pools. Terry, clambering up from her side of the big log, heard only the shouting of the brook. She grasped the dead branches, pulled herself up, slipped a little, got a new foothold. Terry's head, her face flushed rosily, her eyes never brighter, popped up on one side of the log just in time with the tick of her destiny's clock.

That is to say, just as Steve Packard, climbing up from the other side, thrust his head up above the top. An astonished grunt from Steve who in the first start of the encounter came close to falling backward, a little choking ejaculation from Terry whose eyes widened wonderfully—and the two of them settled silently into their places on the cedar and stared at each other. Some three or four feet only lay between the brim of Steve's hat and Terry's upturned nose.

"Well?" demanded Terry stiffly.

"Well?" countered Steve.

He regarded her very gravely. He had never had a girl materialize this way out of space and his own thoughts. This sudden confronting savored of the supernatural; for the moment it set him aback and he was content to stare wonderingly into the sweet gray eyes so near his own and to take note of the curve of her lips, the redness of them and the dimple which, though departed now, had left a hint of itself behind in its hasty flight.

"If there's one thing I hate worse than a potato-bug," said Terry, "it's a fresh guy! Think you're funny, don't you?"

"Fresh? Funny?"

He lifted his eyebrows. And then, her suspicion clear to him, his gravity departed and the way Terry's dimple had gone and he put back his head and laughed—laughed while the girl, with color deepening and eyes darkening, looked at him indignantly.

"Think I did that on purpose?" he cried in vast good nature. "That I was spying

on you? That I waited until you started to climb up here and then popped my head up just at the same time? All on purpose?"

"That's just exactly what I do think!" Terry told him hotly. "You—you big smarty! Everywhere I go have you got to keep showing up?"

"I'll tell you something," said Steve. "If I had climbed up here just to give you a little surprize party; if I had known you were there and that I could have poked my head up just as you did yours—know what I would have done?"

"What?" Terry in her curiosity condescended to ask.

"I'd have kissed the prettiest girl I ever saw!" he chuckled. "Honest to grandma! That's just what I'd have done. As it was, you half scared me out of my wits; I came as close as you please to going over backward and breaking my neck."

"Not as close as I please. And as for kissing me, Steve Packard, you just try that some time when you want your face slapped good and hard and a bullet pumped into you besides!"

"Mean it?" grinned Steve.

"I most certainly do," she retorted emphatically.

"Offered merely as information?" he wanted to know. "Or as a dare? Or an invitation?"

When she did not reply at once but contented herself by putting a deal of eloquence into a look—which, by the way, had no visible effect upon his rising good humor—he went on to remark:

"If you just slapped my face it would be worth it. If you just shot me through the finger-nail or something like that, it would be worth it still." He examined her critically. "Even if you plugged me square through the thumb——"

"If you don't know it," she informed him aloofly, "you are trespassing right now where you are not wanted. The sooner you trail your big feet off Temple land the better I'll like it!"

"Temple land? Since when was a tree considered as land, Miss Teresa Arriega Temple?"

"Think that's funny?" she scoffed.

"And besides," he continued, "the tree is on Packard property. See that old pine stump over yonder? And that big rock there? Those things mark the boundary-line and you'll notice we're on my side."

Terry's temper flamed higher in her eyes, flashed hotter in her cheeks.

"We are not! And you know we are not! The line runs yonder, just beyond that big white rock on the creek-bank. And you are a good ten feet on my side. Where, if you please, you are not wanted."

"That isn't a pretty enough thought to bear repetition," he offered genially. "Look here, Terry Temple, what's the use——"

"Are you going? Or do you intend just to squat there like a toad and spoil the view for me?"

"Toads are fat animals," he corrected her. "I'm not. More like a bull frog, if you like. What am I going to do? Why, just squat, I guess."

As he leaned back against the limb which offered its support to his shoulders, Terry noted that he wore in full sight at his side the heavy Colt he had bought the other night in Red Creek—a new habit with Steve Packard.

"Gunman, are you?" she jeered. "I might have known it. Gunmen are all cowards."

He sighed.

"You can be the most irritating young lady I ever met. And why? What have I ever done to you—besides save you from drowning? Since we are neighbors, why not be good friends? By the way, where do you carry your gun?"

"It's different with a girl," she said bluntly. "There's some excuse for her. With the kind that's filling the woods lately she's apt to need it."

"And you wouldn't be afraid to use it?"

"I'm not here to chin with you all day," observed Terry coolly. "And you haven't told me what you're doing on my land."

"Your land?" he demanded.

"On my side of the line then."

He considered the question.

"I'm here to meet some one," he answered finally.

"I like your nerve! Arranging to meet your friends here! Steve Packard, you are the—the—the——"

"Go on," he prompted. "You'll need a cuss word now; any other finish will sound flat."

"—the *Packardiest* Packard I ever heard of!" she concluded. "You and your friend——"

"No more my friend than he is yours," he said, interrupting her. "An individual

named Blenham. And I'm not here so much to meet him as—let's say to head him off."

Terry set it down that, since it was next to impossible at any time for a Packard to speak the truth, he was just lying to her for the sake of the exercise. She was on the point of saying this emphatically when Steve said "sh!" and pointed. She heard a breaking of brush and saw the horns of a steer; the animal was coming into the trail from the Packard side.

"You just watch," whispered Steve. "And sit right still. It won't do you any harm to know what's going on."

The big steer broke through into the trail, stopped and sniffed and then came on up the stream. Behind came another and another, emerging from the shadows, passing through the swiftly fading light of the open, gone again into the shadows that lay over the wooded Temple acreage. In all, came nine big fat steers, and behind them, sitting loosely in his saddle, came Blenham.

ONLY when the last steer had crossed the line did Steve rise suddenly, standing upright on the great log, his hands on his hips. Terry looking up into his face saw that all of the good humor had gone from it and that there was something ominous in the darkening of his eyes.

"Hold on, Blenham!" he called.

Blenham drew a quick rein, bringing his horse to an abrupt and restive standstill.

"That you, Packard?" he asked quietly.

"It is," answered Steve briefly. "On the job, too, Blenham. All the time."

Blenham laughed.

"So it seems," he said, his look, like his tone, eloquent of an innuendo which embraced Terry evilly. "If you're invitin' me to join your little party, I ain't got the time. Thanks jus' the same."

Since one's consciousness may harbor several clear-cut impressions simultaneously, Steve Packard, while he was thinking of other matters, felt that never until this moment had he hated Blenham properly; no, nor respected him as it would be the part of wisdom to do.

The man's glance running over Terry Temple's girlishness was like the crawling of a slug over a wild flower and supplied a new, and perhaps the, keynote to Blenham's ugliness. It was borne in upon Steve that his grandfather's lieutenant was bad, absolutely bad; that, old adages to the contrary notwithstanding, here was a character with not a hint of redemption in it; after the Packard way, this youngest Packard was ready to condemn out of hand.

And further, to all of this, Steve marked how Blenham had drawn a quick rein but had shown no tremor of uneasiness; Steve considered that, though the man had been taken completely by surprize, he had given no sign of being startled but had answered a sharp summons with a cool, quiet voice. So, summing it up, here was one to be hated and watched.

"What are you doing on my land, Blenham?" asked Steve sharply. "And where are you driving those steers?"

Blenham eased himself in his saddle and drew his broad hat lower over his eyes; thus he partly hid the patch which he had worn since he came from the doctor's hands.

"I ain't on your land any more," he returned. "An' as for them steers—what's it to you, anyhow?"

Open defiance was one thing Steve had not looked for.

"Looking for more trouble yet, Blenham?" he asked briefly.

Blenham shrugged.

"I'm tendin' to business," he said slowly. "No, I'm not lookin' for trouble—yet. Since you want to know, I'm hazin' them cow-brutes the shortes' way off'n Number Ten an' on to the north trail. I'm puttin' 'em on the trot to the Big Bend ranch where they happen to belong."

Steve lifted his brows, for the moment wondering. Blenham was not waiting for pitch dark to move these steers; he manifested no alarm at being discovered; now he calmly admitted that he was driving them to old man Packard's ranch where they belonged. It was possible that he was right.

In the few weeks that he had been back Steve had not had the time to know every head on his wide scattered acreage; as the steers had trotted through the shadows and into the open his eyes had been less for them than for the coming of Blenham and he was not sure of the brands.

He felt that Terry's eyes, as Terry sat very still on her log, were steadily upon him.

"Blenham," he said curtly, "I don't know whose cattle those are, but I do know this much: If they are mine I am going to have them back; if they are not mine I am

going to have them back just the same."

"How do you make that out?" demanded Blenham.

"I make out that neither you nor any other man has any business driving stock off my range without consulting me first."

"They're Big Bend cows," muttered Blenham. "The ol' man's orders——"

"Curse the old man's orders!" Steve's voice rang out angrily. "If he can't be decent to me, can't he at least let me alone? Need he send you here to do business with me? If you want orders, Blenham, you just take these from me: Ride back to the old man on Big Bend ranch and tell him that what stock is on my ranch I keep here until he can prove it is his! Understand? If he can prove that these steers belong to him—and I don't believe he can and you can tell him that, too—why then, let him send me the money to pay for their pasturage and he can have them. And in the meantime, Mr. Blenham, get out and be —— to you!"

For the moment Steve lost all thought of Terry, who was sitting very still. His mind was filled with his grandfather and his grandfather's chosen tool. So, when he thought that he heard the suspicion of a stifled giggle, a highly amused and vastly delighted little giggle, he was for the instant of the opinion that Blenham was laughing at him.

But the intruder was all seriousness. He sat motionless, his glance stony, his thought veiled, his one good eye giving no more hint of his purpose than did the patch over the other eye. In the end he shrugged.

"My orders," he said finally, "was simply to haze them steers back to the Big Bend. The ol' man didn't say nothin' about startin' anything if you got unreasonable." Again he shrugged elaborately. "I'll come again if he says so," he concluded and, jabbing his spurs viciously into his horse's flanks, his sole sign of irritation, Blenham rode away through the woods.

"He let go too easy," murmured Terry. "He's got a card in the hole yet."

Her eyes followed the departing rider; she pursed her lips after him.

Steve turned and looked down upon her.

"I hope you don't mind if I trespass to the extent of riding after those steers?" he offered. "I want to drive them back and at the same time I don't mind making sure that Blenham is still on his way."

Terry regarded him long and searchingly.

"Go ahead," she said at last and, as if an explanation were necessary, she continued: "There's just one animal I hate worse than I do a Packard! For once the fence is down between you and Temple land, Steve Packard."

"Let's keep it down!" he said impulsively. "You and I ——"

"No, thanks!" Terry rose swiftly to her feet, balancing on her log, reminding him oddly of a bright bird about to take flight. "You just remember that there's just one animal I hate *almost* as much as I do Blenham, and that that's a Packard."

And so she jumped down from the log and left him.

CHAPTER XV

BLENHAM must have ridden late into the night, for, at a very early hour the next morning, he was at the Big Bend ranch fifty miles to the north and reporting to his employer. Early as it was, the old man had breakfasted and now the wide black hat far back on his head and the spurs on his big boots bespoke his readiness to be riding.

At times he stood stock still, his hands on his hips, staring down at Blenham's lesser stature; at other times, and in a deep, thoughtful silence, he strode back and forth in the great barn-like library, his spurs jingling.

"Why, —— it man," he exploded once during the forepart of the interview, "the boy is a Packard! I'm proud of him. We're going to make a real man out of Stephen yet. Haven't I said the words a dozen times: 'Break a fool an' make a man!' I'm tellin' you, the las' Packard to be spoiled by havin' too much easy money has lived an' died. All we got to do with Stephen is put him on foot; set him down in the good ol'-fashioned dirt where he's got to work for what he gets, an' he'll come through, same as I did. Yes sir!"

Blenham waited for his signal to continue his report and when he got it, a look and a nod, he resumed, face, voice and eye alike expressionless of any personal interest in the matter.

"You know them nine big steers as strayed from here some time ago? I tol' you about 'em two or three weeks ago. Well, I found 'em like I said I would, all nine of 'em, an' on Ranch Number Ten."

"It's quite a way for cattle to stray," said the old man sharply.

Blenham shrugged carelessly.

"Oh, I dunno," he returned lightly. "I've knowed 'em to go fu'ther than that. Well, I made a pass to haze 'em on back this way an' young Packard blocks my play."

The old man's eye brightened.

"What did he say?" he asked eagerly.

"He said," said Blenham, picking at his hatband, "as how if the stock was yours, which he didn't believe, he'd hold 'em until you sent over enough coin to pay for their feed. He said as how, if you couldn't be decent, you better anyhow leave him alone. He said to —— with both of us!"

"He did?" cried old Packard. "He said that, Blenham?"

"He did," answered Blenham with a quick, curious, sidewise glance.

Packard's great hand was lifted and came down mightily upon his thigh as, suddenly released, the old man's voice boomed out in a great peal of laughter.

"Ho!" he cried, shouting out the words to be heard far out across the open meadow. "Say to —— with me, does he? Holds my stock for pasture-money, does he? Defies me to do my ——est, him a young penniless whipper-snapper, me a millionaire an' a man-breaker! Why, curse it, he's a man already, Blenham! He's a Packard to his backbone, I tell you! By the Lord, I've a notion to jump into my car and go get the boy!"

A troubled shadow came and went swiftly across Blenham's face, not to be seen by the old man who was staring out of his window. All of the craft there was in the ranch foreman rose to the surface.

"Yes," he agreed quietly, "he's got the makin's in him. He ain't scared of the devil himself, which is one right good earmark. He's independent, which is another good sign. Why, when I runs across him an' that Temple girl out in the woods——"

"What's that!" boomed the old man, though he had heard well enough. "Do you mean to tell me——"

"They was sittin' on top a big log," said Blenham tonelessly. "Confidential lookin', you know. I won't say he was holdin' her hands, an' at the same time I won't say he wasn't. An' I won't say he'd jus' kissed her, two seconds before I rode aroun' a bend in the trail." One of his ponderous shrugs and a grimace concluded his meaning. Then he laughed. "Nor I wouldn't say he hadn't. But, like I was tellin' you——"

"You were tellin' me," growled the old man, "that that scoundrel of a Temple's fool of a girl is tryin' her hand at spell-bindin' my gran'son Stephen! The —— little sap-head! Look here, Blenham, you've got more gumption than most. Tell me how far things have gone an' what Temple's game is. Guy Little has been tellin' me the same sort of thing."

"There ain't much to tell," answered Blenham. "That is, that a man couldn't guess without bein' told. He's your gran'son; even with a scrap on between you an' him, still blood is thicker'n water an' some day, maybe, you'll pass on to him all you got. Leastways, there's a chance an' also he oughta fit pretty snug in a girl's eye. Fu'ther to all that, it's jus' the same ol' story. A feller an' a girl, an' the girl with a fine figger an' a fine pair of eyes which, bein' a she-girl, she knows how to use. Seein' as you ask the question, I guess I could answer it by jus' sayin' that the Temples are makin' the one move they'd be sure to make."

The senior Packard's scowl had known fame as long as fifty years ago; never was it blacker than right now. For a little he stood still glaring at the floor. Blenham watched him covertly, a look of craft in the one good eye.

"Better go over an' see Temple right away," said Packard presently. "He won't be able to pay up his next installment. Tell him I'm goin' to foreclose an' drive him out. While you're at it you can show him the plum foolishness of sickin' his —— girl on Stephen. How it won't bring 'em any good an' will jus' get me out on his trail red-hot. He'll understand." And the stern old mouth set into lines, of which Blenham read the full and emphatic meaning. "Go on! Anything else to report?"

After his fashion in business matters, he had pondered deeply but briefly upon this interference of Terry, had planned, had instructed his agent and now turned to whatever might next demand his attention in connection with his campaign against and for Steve Packard. And Blenham, deeming that he had scored a certain point, moved straight on to another.

"He said—an' she watched an' listened an' giggled—as how he was in right, an' you

was in wrong; as how the law was on his side an' he'd stick it out; how he could take the whole ruction into court an' beat you; how ——"

Old Hell-fire Packard stared at him, mumbling heavily:

"He said that? Stephen, my gran'son, said that?"

"Yes," lied Blenham glibly. "Them was his words. An', not knowin' a whole lot about law an' such——"

He ended there, knowing that his words went unheeded. The look upon the old man's face changed slowly from one of pure amazement to one of pain, grief, disappointment. Stephen, his grandson, threatened to go to law! It was unthinkable that any one save a thief and an outright scoundrel, such by the way as were all of his business rivals and the men who refused to tote and carry at his bidding, should make a threat like that: worse than unthinkable, utterly, depravedly disgraceful that one of the house of Packard should resort to such devious and damnable practices. For an instant Blenham thought that tears were actually gathering in the weary old eyes.

But the emotion which came first was gone in a scurry before a sudden windy rage. The face which had been graven with humiliation and chagrin went fiery red; the big hands clenched and were uplifted; the great booming voice trembled to the shouted words:

"Let him; —— him, let him! I can break the fool quicker that way than any other; don't he know it takes money, money without end, for the perjurin', tricky, slippery law sharks that'll bleed a man, aye, suck out his life-blood an' then spit him out like the pulp of an orange? Infernal young puppy-dawg! See what it's done for him already, this rich-man's-son business. To think that one of my blood, my own gran-'son, should go to law! Why, by high heaven, Blenham, the thing's downright disgraceful!"

Swiftly, deftly, employing a remark like a surgeon's lancet, Blenham offered:

"I have a hunch that Temple girl put it in his head."

"You're right!" This new suggestion required no weighing and fine balancing. You could attribute no villainy whatever to one of the old man's enemies, that he would not admit the extreme likelihood of your being right. "Stephen ain't that sort; she's got him by the nose, —— take her! She's drivin' him to it, an' it's Temple drivin' her. An' it's up to you an' me to drive him clean out'n this corner of the universe. Which we can do without goin' to the law!" he interjected scornfully. "I reckon you understan', don't you Blenham?"

Blenham nodded and put on his hat.

"I'm to give him —— from the start to finish, until we drive him an' her out the country. An' I'm to give your gran'son —— too an' at the same time, until we bust him wide open. That right?"

"Right an' go to it!" cried Packard.

Blenham saluted as he might have done were he still a sergeant down on the border, wheeled and went out. Five minutes later he was riding again toward the south. And now the look on his face was one of near triumph, for at last the time had come when the old man had given outright the instructions which could make many things possible.

THAT same day, about noon, Terry Temple flashing across country in her car, met Blenham on the country road. She was going toward Red Creek, her errand urgent as were always the errands of Terry. Half a mile away she knew him, first by the white stocking of his favorite mare, second by his big bulk and the way he sat in the saddle.

So, quite like the old Packard whom she so heartily detested, she gave him the horn and never an inch of the road, which was none too wide. Blenham, his mouth working, jerked his horse out of the way, down over the edge of the slope, and cursed after her as she passed him.

Terry, in Red Creek, went straight to the store and to a shelf in a far and dusty corner where were all of the purchasable books of the village. A thumb in her mouth, a frown in her eyes, she regarded them long and soberly.

In the end she severed the Gordian knot by taking an even dozen volumes. There were a grammar, an ancient history, some composition books and, most important of all, a treatise upon social usages containing advice as to how to write letters, what R. S. V. P. meant, Mr. and Mrs. So-and-so request and so forth, how a lady should greet a gentleman friend—in short, an answer to

all possible questions of right and wrong ways of appearing in polite society. With her purchases stowed away in a cracker-box, Terry turned again toward the ranch.

In the ordinary course of events Terry should have returned to her home well ahead of Blenham. But this afternoon she made a wide, circling detour to chat briefly with Rod Norton's young wife at the Rancho de las Flores, and so came under the Temple oaks after dusk.

As she turned in at the gate, she saw Blenham's horse standing tied down by the stable. Terry's eyes opened wonderingly and a little flush came into her cheeks. Plainly Blenham was closeted with her father; Terry bit her lip, gathered her books in her arms and hastened toward the house.

The bawling of a mother cow and a baby calf, separated by a corral fence, had quite drowned out the purr of her motor; her step, as usual, was light upon the porch. The first that Temple and Blenham knew of her coming was the sight of her form in the doorway, her face turned curiously upon them.

And in that instant, while all three stood motionless, Terry saw and wondered at a look of understanding which had flashed between her own father and the despised representative of a hated race. Further, she noted how the glass in Temple's hand was still lifted as was the glass in Blenham's, the whisky still undrunk, winking at her in the pale lamplight.

"Isn't your eternal drinking bad enough without your asking such as that to drink with you?" she asked quietly. Very, very quietly for Miss Terry Temple.

Her father shifted a trifle uneasily. Blenham watched her intently, admiringly, after a gross fashion, and yet a bit contemptuously. Blenham could put a look like that into his eye; to him a girl was a thing that might be both sneered at and coveted.

"My dear," said Temple, striving for clear enunciation and in the end achieving it heavily, "I am glad you came. I want you to listen. We must act wisely. We must not misjudge Mr. Blenham."

While Terry remained silent, looking from one to the other of the two men, Temple drank his whisky hastily, furtively, snatching the second when her gaze had gone to Blenham.

"What's the game?" asked Terry in a moment.

She set her books down upon the table at her side, put out her hand to the back of a chair and, like the men, remained standing.

Temple looked to Blenham, who merely shrugged his thick shoulders and sipped at his whisky as if it had been a light wine and very soft to an appreciative palate. In some vague way the act was vastly insolent. Temple appeared uncertain, no uncommon thing with him; then, going to set his emptied glass down, he put an elbow on the mantel, dropped his head and spoke in a low, mumbling voice:

"The game? It's what it always was, Terry girl, what it always will be: the game of the ear of corn and the mill-stones; the game of the unfortunate under the iron heel."

"Unfortunate!" cried Terry in disgust. "Pooh!"

"Listen to me," commanded her father. "You ask: 'What's the game'? and I'm telling you." His head was up now; Terry noted a new look in his eyes as he hurried on. "It's just the game of life, after all. The war of those who have everything against those who have nothing; of men like old Hell-fire Packard against men like me. A game to be won, more often than not, through the sheer force of massed money that squeezes the life out of the under dog—but to be lost when the moneyed fool, curse him, runs up against a team like Blenham and me!"

"Blenham and you?" she repeated. "You and Blenham? You mean to tell me that you are chipping in with him?"

Blenham turned his whisky glass slowly in his great thick fingers. His eye shone with its crafty light; his lips were parted a little as if they held themselves in readiness for a swift interruption if Temple said the wrong thing or went too far.

"You are prejudiced," said Temple. "You always have been. Just because Blenham here has represented Packard, and Packard——"

"Is an old thief!" she cried passionately. "And worse! As Packard's *Man Friday*, Blenham doesn't exactly make a hit with me!"

"Come, come!" exclaimed Temple. "Curb your tongue, Teresa, my dear. If you will only listen——"

"Shoot then and get it over."

Terry sank into her chair, clasped her gauntleted hands about a pair of plump

knees which drew Blenham's gaze approvingly, and set her white teeth to nibbling impatiently at her under lip as though setting a command upon it for silence.

"Let's have it, dad."

"That's sensible," mumbled Temple. "You always were a smart girl, Teresa, when you cared to be. Let's see; where had I got? Oh, yes; speaking of Blenham chipping in with us, as you put it."

"With you!" corrected Terry briefly.

Temple appeared neither to have heard nor to have been moved by the interruption; Blenham looked at her critically and again his look was dual in its expression, speaking of contempt for a girl's slight brain and admiration for her body.

"We're mortgaged to Old Man Packard," continued Temple, somewhat hasty about it now that he had fairly plunged into the current of what he had to say, as if the water were cold and he was anxious to clamber out upon the far side. "Not much in a way but a good deal when you figure on how tight money is and how little we've seen of it these last few years. Now, Packard sends Blenham across with a message: He's going to foreclose; he is going to drive us out—to ruin us. That is Packard's word."

TERRY stiffened in her chair; her chin rose a little in the air; her eyes brightened; the color in her cheeks deepened. That was her only answer to Packard's ultimatum as quoted to her father by Blenham and by Temple to her. Knowing that there was still more to come she sat still, her clasped hands tightening about her knees. Blenham, as still as she, was sipping at his whisky.

"But Blenham is a white man."

Temple attempted to say it with the force of conviction, but Terry merely sniffed and Temple himself failed somewhat to put his heart into his words. He hurried on, repeating:

"Yes, a white man. And he's got a little money of his own that he's been tucking away all these years of working for Packard. He comes over this evening, Teresa, my dear, and makes us a — curse it, a generous offer. You see, as things are, we are bound to lose the whole place, lock, stock and barrel, to Packard; you don't want to do that do you?"

"Go on," said Terry. Her face was suddenly as white as the hands from which she was swiftly, nervously stripping her gauntlets. "Just what is Blenham's generous offer, dad?"

"It's one of two things."

He hesitated and licked his lips. Terry's heart sank lower yet; it took him so long to set the thing into words. "You see, as old man Packard's foreman and agent, he comes to tell us that he is ordered to foreclose—to break us utterly. As a friend to us he says ——"

"For —— sake!" cried Terry sharply. "What does he say?"

"He will pay us a thousand dollars to let him take over everything. He will assume the mortgage; he will scrap it out with old Packard; he will clear the title; and, if we get where we want the ranch back some time, he will let us buy him out for just what he has put in it."

Terry looked at him gravely.

"In other words," she said quietly, "Blenham plans to give you one thousand dollars; then to pay to old Packard the seven thousand you owe him; and for this amount of eight thousand to grab an outfit that is worth twenty thousand if it's worth a nickel! That's his generous offer, is it?"

"My dear——"

"Don't my dear me!" she snapped impatiently. "Just go on and get the whole idiotic thing out of your system. What else?"

"That's all. As I have said already, as things are, we are bound to lose everything to Packard. Blenham steps up and offers us a thousand ——"

"I should think he would step up! Lively! Well, I can't stop you, can I? You don't have to have my consent to make a laughing stock out of yourself. Have you signed up with Blenham already?"

Temple sought to assume an air of dignity which went poorly with his ragged slippers and bleary eye.

"Blenham has his money in a safe in Red Creek. There will be papers to be signed. We are going there now. I—I am sorry you take it this way, Teresa."

Then she sprang to her feet, her two hands clenched, her eyes blazing.

"And I," she cried hotly, "am sorry. Oh, I am ashamed that one of the name of Temple should sink so low as to hobnob with a cur and a scoundrel, a cheat, a liar and all that Blenham is and that you and I, and the whole country knows he is! I'd

rather see old Hell-fire Packard break you and grind you under foot than see you stand there and drink with that thing!"

And, that there should be no mistake, her finger shot out, pointing at Blenham.

"Terry!" commanded her father. "Be silent! You don't know what you are saying!"

"Don't I though? I—I——"

Blenham laughed as she broke off, laughed again as he stood watching how she was breathing rapidly.

"Pretty puss," he said impudently, "you need them pink an' white nails of your'n trimmed."

"Don't you dare say a word to me!" she flung at him. "Not a word!"

"Not a single little word, eh?" He tossed off his whisky, dropped the empty glass to the floor behind him and came a quick stride toward her, an ugly leer twisting at the corner of his mouth, his one eye burning. "I've got your ol' man where I want him; he knows it an' I an' you know it. An' when I like I can have you where I want you, too. Understan'?"

He had taken another step toward her. The sudden thought leaped up in her mind that he and her father had had many drinks together before her arrival. She drew back slowly. Temple, seeing that for the moment all attention had been drawn from him, reached out for a bottle on the far end of the mantel.

Then, suddenly and without another word being spoken, Terry was galvanized into action. Blenham was coming on toward her and she saw the look in his eye. She whipped back; her breath caught in her throat; the color ran out of her cheeks. She glanced wildly toward her father; his fingers were closing about the neck of a bottle when they should have been at the neck of a man.

Terry whipped up a book from the table—it was a volume answering many a question about how to act in society but without any mention of such a situation as now had arisen—and flung it straight into Blenham's face. Then she slipped through the door behind her, slammed it and ran out, down the porch and into the night. Behind her she heard Blenham's heavy, spurred boots and Blenham's curse.

"If he comes on I will kill him!"

She was at her car; her revolver was in her hand. She saw Blenham come outside. A moment he seemed to hesitate, his big bulk outlined against the door's rectangle of light, then she heard him laugh and saw him return to the room. She came back slowly, on tiptoe, to stand under the window.

"You can drive the girl's car, can't you?" Blenham was asking. And when Temple admitted that he could: "Let's pile in an' be on our way. Like I said, you close with me tonight or I won't touch the thing."

Then again Terry ran back to her car. She sprang in, started her engine, opened the throttle as she let in the clutch and, making a wide circle, shot up the road, through the gate and away into the darkness.

"I'll take this pot yet, Mr. Cutthroat Blenham!" she was crying within herself.

CHAPTER XVI

THOUGH a tempest brewed in her soul and her blood grew turbulent with it, Terry did not hesitate from the first second. Just the other day upon a certain historic log had she not said, "I hate Blenham worse than a Packard."

True, she had gone on to intimate that the youngest of the house of Packard was scarcely more to her liking than was the detested foreman, but— Well, if Steve didn't know at least Terry did, that that remark was uttered purely for its rhetoric effect.

"He's been a pretty decent scout from the jump," Terry admitted serenely to herself as she threw her car into high and went streaking through the pale moonlight. Then she smiled, the first quick smile to come and go since she had hurled a book in Blenham's face. "A pretty decent scout from the jump!"

He had literally jumped into her life, going after her quite as though——

"Oh, shucks!" laughed Terry. "It's the moonlight."

There came a certain sharp turn in the road where even she must slow down. Here Terry came to a dead stop, not so much in hesitation as because she was conscious of a departure from the old trails and felt deeply that the act might be filled with significance, for, when she had made the turn, she would have crossed the old deadline; she would have passed the boundary and invaded Packard property.

"Well," thought Terry, "when you are between the devil and the deep sea what are you going to do?"

So she let in her clutch, opened her throttle, sounded her horn purely by way of defiance and, when next she stopped, it was at the very door of the old ranch-house where Steve Packard should be found at this early hour of the evening.

The men in the bunk-house had heard her coming and to the last man of them pushed to the door to see who it might be. Their first thought, of course, would be that the old mountain-lion, Steve's grandfather, had come roaring down from his place in the north. Terry tossed up her head so that they might see and know and marvel and speculate and do and say anything which pleased them. Having crossed her Rubicon, she didn't care the snap of her pretty fingers who knew.

"I want Steve Packard," she called to them. "Where is he?"

It was young Barbee who answered, Barbee of the innocent blue eyes.

"In the ranch-house, Miss Terry," he said. And he came forward, patting his hair into place, hitching at his belt, smiling at her after his most successful lady-killing fashion. "Sure I won't do?"

"You?" Terry laughed. "When I'm looking for a man I'm not going to stop for a boy, Barbee dear!"

She jumped down and knocked loudly at Steve's door while the men at the bunk-house laughed joyously and Barbee cursed under his breath.

Steve, supposing that it was one of his own men grown suddenly formal, did not take his stockinged feet down from his table or his pipe from his lips as he called shortly—

"Come in!"

And Terry asked no second invitation. In she went, slamming the door after her so that those who gawked at the bunk-house entrance might gawk in vain.

And now Steve Packard achieved in one flashing second the removal of his feet from the table, the shifting of his pipe from his teeth, the swift buttoning of his shirt across his chest. He stared at her.

"I'll be——"

"Say it!" laughed Terry. "Well, I'm here. Came on business. There's a hole in the toe of your sock," she ended with a flash of malice as she noted that, for the first time since she had known him, he was embarrassed and trying to hide a pair of man's-sized feet behind his table.

Steve grew violently red. Terry laughed deliciously.

"I—I didn't know——"

"Of course you didn't," she agreed. "Now, I'm in something of a rush of the red streak variety, but in a little book of mine I have read that a young gentleman receiving a young lady caller after dark should have his hair combed, his shirt buttoned and at least a pair of slippers on. I'll give you three minutes."

Packard looked at her wonderingly. Then, without an answer, he strode by her and to the window. The shade he flipped up so that any one who cared to might look into the room. Next he went to the door and called:

"Bill, Oh, Bill Royce! Come up here. Here's some one who wants a word with you!"

Terry Temple's face started burning, burning red. There came the impulse to put both arms about this big, shirt-sleeved, towseled Packard man and squeeze him hard—and at the end of it pinch him harder! For in Terry's soul was understanding, and he both delighted her and shamed her.

But when Steve came back and slipped his feet into his boots and sat down across the table from her, Terry's face told him nothing.

"You're a funny guy, Steve Packard," she admitted thoughtfully.

"That's nothing," grinned Steve, by now quite himself again. "So are you."

She had come from the Temple ranch without any hat; her hair had tumbled down long ago and now framed her vivacious face most adorably. Adorably, that is, to a man's mind; other women are not always agreed upon such matters. At any rate, Steve watched with both admiration and regret in his eyes as Terry shook out the loose bronze tresses and began to bring neat order out of bewilderingly becoming chaos. Her mouth was full of pins when Bill Royce came in, but still she could whisper tantalizingly—

"If you picked on Bill for a chaperon because he's blind——"

Royce came in.

"That you, Terry Temple?" he asked. "An' you wanted me? What's up?"

"I came to have a talk with Steve Packard," answered Terry promptly.

She got up and took Royce's hands between hers and led him to a chair before she relinquished them. And before she went back to her own place she had said swiftly:

"I haven't seen you since you licked Blenham. I—I am glad you got your chance, Bill."

"Thank you, Miss Terry," said Royce quietly. "I sorta evened up things with him. Not quite, but sorta. Then you didn't want me?"

"Not this trip, Bill. It's just a play of Mr. Packard's here. He didn't like to have it known that I had him all alone here; afraid it might compromise him, you know."

She giggled.

"Or queer him with his girl, mos' likely," chuckled Royce.

Whereat Steve glowered and Terry looked startled.

"You're both talking nonsense," said Packard. He reached out for his pipe but dropped it again to the table without lighting it. "If there is anything I can do for you, Miss Temple——"

He saw how the look in her eyes altered. Nothing less than an errand of transcendent importance could have brought her here and he knew it. And now, in quick, eager words she told him:

"Blenham has almost put one across on us. Our outfit is mortgaged to your old thief of a grandfather for a miserable seven thousand dollars. Old Packard sent Blenham over to tell dad he is going to shove us out. Blenham plays foxy and offers dad a thousand dollars for the mortgage. Oh, I don't understand just how to say it but Blenham has a few thousand dollars he has saved and stolen here and there and he means to grab the Temple ranch for a total of eight thousand dollars; seven thousand to old Packard, one thousand to dad——"

"But surely——"

"Surely nothing! Dad's half-full of whisky as usual and a thousand dollars looks as big to him as a full moon. Besides he's sure of losing to old Hell-fire sooner or later."

"And you want me——"

"If you've got any money or can raise any," said Terry crisply, "I'm offering you a good proposition—the same Blenham is after. The ranch is worth a whole lot better than twenty thousand dollars. My proposition is— But can you raise eight thousand?"

Steve regarded her a moment speculatively. Then, quite after the way of Steve Packard, he slipped his hand into his shirt and brought out a sheaf of bank-notes and tossed them to her across the table.

"I'm not a bloodsucker," he said quietly. "Take what you like; I'll stake you to the wad."

Terry looked, counted—and gasped.

"Ten thousand!" she cried. "Good Lord, Steve Packard! Ten thousand—and you'd lend me——"

"To pay off a mortgage to my grandfather, yes," he answered soberly, quite conscious of what he was doing and of its recklessness and, perhaps, idiocy. "And to beat Blenham."

She jumped up and ran around the table to put her two hands on his shoulders and shake him.

"You're a God-blessed brick, Steve Packard!" she cried ringingly. "But I'm not a bloodsucker, either. If you're a dead game sport—well, that's what I'd rather be than anything else you can put a name to. Lace your boots, get into a hat, shove that in your pocket." And she slipped the roll of bills into his hand. "By now, dad and Blenham will be on the road to Red Creek; we'll beat them to it, have a lawyer and some papers all ready, and when they show up we'll just take dad out of Blenham's hands."

"I don't quite get you," said Steve. "If you won't borrow the money——"

"I'll make dad sell out to you for eight thousand. He pockets one thousand and with the other seven your money-grabbing, pestiferous old granddad is paid off. Then you and I frame a deal between us——"

"Pardners!" ejaculated Bill Royce. "Glory be! Steve Packard an' Terry Temple pardners!"

"Don't you see?" Terry was excitedly tugging at Steve's arm. "Come on; come alive. We're going to play freeze-out with Hell-fire Packard and his right-hand bower, both. And we're going to keep dad from doing a fool thing. And we're going to— Oh, come on, can't you?"

Steve got up and stood looking down at her curiously. Then he laughed and turned away for his coat and hat.

"Lead on; I'm trailing you," he said briefly.

Bill Royce rubbed his hands and chuckled.

"Even if I ain't got eyes," he mused, "there's some things I can see real clear."

CHAPTER XVII

THERE seemed no particular need for haste, and yet Terry ran eagerly to her car and Steve hurried after her with long strides while the men down at the bunk-house surmised and looked to Bill Royce for a measure of explanation. Steve was not beyond the age of enthusiasm; Terry was all atingle. Life was shaping itself to an adventure.

And so, though it appeared that all of the time in the world was theirs for loitering—for it should be a simple matter to come to Red Creek well in advance of Blenham and his dupe—Terry yielded to her excitement, Steve yielded out of hand to the lure of Terry and, quite gay about it, they sped away through the moonlight. While Terry, driving, perforce kept her eyes busied with the road, Steve Packard leaned back in his seat and contented himself with the vision of his fellow adventurer.

"Terry Temple," he told her emphatically and with utter sincerity, "you are absolutely the prettiest thing I ever saw."

"I'm not a thing," said Terry. "And besides, I know it already. And——"

Then it was that they got their first puncture; a worn tire cut through by a sharp fragment of rock so that they heard the air gush out windily. Terry jammed on her brakes. Steve jumped out and made hasty examination.

"Looks like a man had gone after it with an ax," he announced cheerfully. "Good thing you've got a spare."

Terry flung down from her seat impatiently.

"I need some new tires," she said as she from one side and he from the other began seeking in the tool-box under the seat for jack and wrench. "That spare is soft, too, and half worn through; I'll bet we get more than one puncture before the job's done. But it's mounted, anyway."

Steve went down on his knee and began jacking the car up; Terry, standing over him, was busy with her wrench loosening the lugs at the rim. Then, while he made the exchange and tightened the nuts, she strapped the punctured tire in its carrier and slipped back into her seat. As Steve got in beside her he marked how speculatively her eyes were busied with the road.

"We've got them behind us, haven't we?" he asked. Terry nodded quickly.

"Yes. We've got the head start and they're on horseback. It's no trick to beat them to it. But— Oh, I saw a look on Blenham's face tonight! He's bad, Steve Packard, all bad; the kind that stops at nothing! And somehow, somehow he's got a strangle-hold on poor old dad and is making him do this. We've got the head start; we can beat them to Red Creek but——"

"But you don't like the idea of leaving your father alone in Blenham's company tonight?" he finished for her. "Is that it?"

Again she nodded. He could see her teeth nibbling at her lips.

"Then," he suggested, "why go to Red Creek at all? Why not turn back here and stop them? You can take Mr. Temple back home with you. I imagine that between the two of us we can make Blenham understand he is not wanted this time."

"I was thinking of that," said Terry.

And where the Ranch Number Ten road runs into the country road, Terry turned to the right, headed again toward her own home.

When, with Steve at her heels, she ran up on the porch, it was to be met by Iki, the Japanese cook, his eyes shining wildly.

"Where's my father?" she asked, and Iki waving his hands excitedly answered:

"Departed with rapid haste and many curse-words from his gentleman friend. The master could not make a stop for one little more drink of whisky. The other strike and vomit threats and say, 'Most surely will I cause that you tarry long time in jail-side.' Saying likewise, 'I got you by the long hair like I want you and yes, by ——, like some day soon I get your lovely daughter!' Only he say the latter with unpleasant words of——"

Terry was shaking him by both shoulders.

"Where did they go?" she demanded. "How long ago?"

"On horses, running swiftly," gibbered Iki. "Ten minutes, maybe—perhaps twenty or thirty. Who can tell the time when——"

"Why didn't we meet them?" asked Steve of Terry, "if they are really headed for Red Creek?"

"They are taking all of the short-cuts there are," she answered promptly. "They'll take a cow-trail through the ranch, cut across the lower end of your place and come into the old road just beyond. Blenham's all fox; he has guessed that I am out to put a spoke in his wheel somehow. He won't be wasting any perfectly good moonlight. Come on!" And again she was running to the car. "We'll overhaul them just the same."

"I believe you," grunted Steve, once more seated beside her, the engine drumming, the wheels spinning. "You don't know what a speed law is, do you?"

"Speed law?" she repeated absently, her eyes on the next dark turn in the road. "What's that?"

He chuckled and settled back in his seat. His eyes, like the girl's, were watchfully bent upon the gloom-filled angle which Terry must negotiate before the way straightened out again before her. Her headlights cut through the shadows; Terry's little body stiffened a bit and her hands tensed on her wheel; her flying speed was lessened an almost negligible trifle; she made the turn and opened the throttle. Steve nodded approvingly.

For the greater part they were silent. He had never seen her in a mood like to-night's. He read in her face, in her eyes, in the carriage of her body, one and the same thing; and that was a complex something made of the several emotions of determination, sorrow and fiery anger.

He read her thought readily; it was clear that she made no attempt to conceal it. She was going to consummate a certain deal, she was grieved and ashamed for her father, she remembered the look on Blenham's face tonight, and again and again her fury shot its red tide into her cheeks.

"Blenham put his dirty hands on her," was Steve's thought, "or tried to."

And he found that his own pulses drummed the hotter as he let his imagination conjure up a picture for him: Blenham's big, knotted hands upon the daintiness that was Terry. In that moment it seemed to him that he had been drawn home across the seas to help mete out punishment to a man—a man who had stricken old Bill Royce and who now dared look evilly upon Terry Temple.

Then came their second puncture, an ugly gash like the first, caused by a flinty fragment of rock driven against the worn outer casing.

"I ordered new tires a month ago," said Terry by way of explanation as she and Steve in the road together set about remedying the trouble.

While he was getting the inner-tube out, squatting in front of her car so as to work in the glow from her headlights, she was rummaging through her repair kit.

"These rocky roads, you know, and the way I drive."

He laughed. "The way she drove!" That meant: "Like the devil!" as he would put it. Over rocky roads, racing right up to a turn, jamming on her brakes when she must slow down a little; swinging about a sharp bend so that her car slid and her tires dragged; in short, getting all of the speed out of her motor that she could possibly extract from it, regardless and coolly contemptuous of skuffed tires and other trifles.

FINDING the cut in the inner-tube was simple enough; the moonlight alone would have shown it. He held it up for her to look at and she shook her head and sighed. But making the patch so that it would hold was another matter, and pumping up the tire when the job was done was still another, and required time and ate up all of Terry's rather inconsiderable amount of patience.

"A little more luck like this," she cried as once more they took to the road, "and Blenham will put one over on us yet!"

It was borne in upon Steve that Terry's fears might prove to be only too well founded. The time she had taken to drive to him at his ranch, the time lost in returning to her home and in changing tires and mending a puncture, had been put to better use by Blenham. True, he was on horseback while they motored. And yet, for a score or so of miles, a determined, brutally merciless man upon a horse may render an account of himself.

But while they both speculated they sped on. They came to the spot where the "old road" turned into the new; Blenham and Temple were to be seen nowhere, though here the country was flat and but sparsely timbered and the moon picked out all objects distinctly.

And so on and on they went, beginning to wonder at last, asking themselves if Blenham

and Temple had drawn out of the road somewhere, hiding in the shadows, to let them go by. But finally, only when they were climbing the last winding grade with Red Creek but a couple of miles away, they saw the two horsemen.

Terry's car swung about a curve in the road and her headlights for a brief instant aided the moon in garishly illuminating a scene to be remembered. Blenham had turned in his saddle, startled perhaps by the sound of the oncoming car or by the gleam of the headlights. His uplifted quirt fell heavily upon the sides of his running horse; rose and fell again upon the rump of Temple's mount, and the two men, their horses leaping under them, were gone over the ridge and down upon the far side.

Five minutes later, from the crest of the ridge, they made out the two running forms on the road below. Blenham was still frantically beating his horse and Temple's. Terry's horn blared, her car leaped, and Blenham, cursing loudly, jerked his horse back on its haunches and well out of the road. Her wheels locked, Terry slid to a standstill.

"Pile in, dad," she said coolly, ignoring Blenham. "Steve Packard and I will take you into Red Creek. Packard is ready to make you a better proposition than Blenham's. Turn your horse loose—he'll go home—and pile in with us."

"He'll do nothing of the kind!" shouted Blenham, his voice husky with his fury. "Just you try that on Temple, an'— He'll do nothing of the kind," he concluded heavily, his mien eloquent of threat.

"We know you think you've got some kind of a strangle-hold on him, Blenham," cut in Terry crisply. "But even if you have, dad is a white man and—dad! What is the matter?"

Temple slipped from his saddle and stood shaking visibly, his face dead white, his eyes staring. Even in the moonlight they could all see the big drops of perspiration on his forehead, glistening as they trickled down. He put out his hand to support himself by gripping at his saddle, missed blindly, staggered and began slowly collapsing where he stood, as if his bones were little by little melting within him. Blenham laughed harshly.

"Drunker'n a boiled owl," he grunted. "But jus' the same sober enough to know——"

"Dad!" cried Terry a second time, out in the road beside him now, her arms belting his slacking body. "It isn't just that. You——"

"Sick," moaned Temple weakly. "God knows—he's been hounding me to death—I don't know—I wanted to stop, to rest back there but—I'm afraid that——"

He broke off panting. Steve jumped out and slipped his own arms about the wilting form.

"Let me get him into the car," he said gently. And when he had lifted Temple and placed him in the seat he added quietly, "You'd better hurry on I think. Get a doctor for him. I'll follow on his horse."

Terry flashed him a look of gratitude, took her place at the wheel and started down grade. Her father at her side continued to settle in his place as long as Steve kept him in sight.

"Well?" growled Blenham, his voice ugly and baffled and throaty with his rage. "You butt in again do you?"

Steve swung up into the saddle just now vacated by Temple.

"Yes," he retorted coolly. "And I'm in to stay, too, if you want to know, Blenham. To the finish."

With only the width of a narrow road between them they stared at each other. Then Blenham jeered:

"O-ho! It's the skirt, huh? Stuck on her yourself, are you?"

Steve frowned but met his piercing look with level contempt.

"Your language is inelegant, friend Blenham," he said slowly. "Like yourself it is better withdrawn from public notice. As to your meaning—why, by thunder, I half believe you are right! And I hadn't thought of it!"

Blenham, caught in one of his rare bursts of heady rage, shook his fist high above his head and cried out savagely:

"I'll beat you yet, the both of you! See if I don't. Yes, you an' your crowd an' him an' her an'——"

"Don't take on too many all at once," suggested Steve.

Only the tail of his eye was on Blenham; he was looking wonderingly and a bit wistfully down the moonlit, empty road.

"I got him where I want him right now," snarled Blenham. "An' her—I'll have her, too, where I want her! An', inside less time than you'd think, I'll have——"

But he clamped his big mouth tight shut, glared at Steve a moment and then, striking with spur and quirt together, so that his frightened horse leaped out frantically, he was gone down the road after Temple and Terry.

As Steve followed, a smile was in his eyes, a smile slowly parting his lips.

"The scoundrel was right!" he mused. "And I hadn't even thought of it! Now how the devil do you suppose he knew?"

And then, before he had gone a dozen yards, a curious, puzzled, uncertain look come into his face.

"If he knows," was his perplexity, "does she?"

CHAPTER XVIII

"FATHER'S got it in his head he is going to die!" cried Terry. "He sha'n't. I won't let him!"

Steve Packard, riding into Red Creek, met Terry coming out. She was just starting, her car gathering speed, but seeing him she had stopped abruptly.

"I left him at the store," she added breathlessly. "He is sick. They are friends there; they'll take care of him. He knows you are coming; he has promised to do business with you and shut Blenham out of the running. You are to hurry before Blenham gets there—he's across the street at the saloon already—after his money, I guess; next thing, unless you block his play, he'll be standing over poor old dad's bed, bullyragging him. Come alive, Steve Packard, and beat him to it."

And with the last words she had started her car, after Terry's way of starting anything, with a leap. Steve reined in after her, urging his horse to a gallop for the first time, calling out sharply:

"But you—where are you going? Why——"

"After Doctor Bridges," Terry called back. She stepped on throttle. "The fool is over at your old thief of a grandfather's, playing chess! The telephone won't——"

He could merely speculate as to just what the telephone would not do. Terry was gone, was already at the fork of the roads, turning northward, hasenting alone on a forty mile drive over lonely roads and into the very lair of the old mountain-lion himself. Steve whistled softly.

"I wish she had invited me to go along," he grunted.

But, instead, she had commissioned him otherwise. So, though his eyes were regretful, he rode on to the store. A backward glance showed him a diminishing red tail-light disporting itself like some new species of firefly gone quite mad; it was twisting this way and that as the road invited; it fairly emulated the gyrations of a corkscrew, with the added motion necessitated by the deep ruts and chuck-holes over and into which the spinning tires were thudding.

Then the shoulder of a hill, a clump of brush, and Terry and her car were gone from him, swallowed up in the night and silence. He looked at his watch. It was twenty minutes after eight. She had forty miles ahead of her, a return of forty miles.

"It will take her two hours each way," he muttered. "Unless she means to pile her car up in a ditch somewhere. Four hours for the trip. That means I won't see her until well after midnight."

And then he grinned a shade sheepishly. Blenham was right. He had thought of those four hours as though they had been four years.

But, for her part, Terry had no intention of being four hours driving a round-trip of any eighty miles that she knew of; she had never done such a thing before and could see no cause for beginning tonight. True, the roads were none too good at best, downright bad often enough.

Well, that was just the sort of thing she was used to. And tonight there was need for haste. Great haste, thought the girl anxiously, as she remembered the look on her father's face when she and the storekeeper's wife had got him into bed.

"I'll have the roads all to myself, that's one good thing."

She settled herself in her seat, preparing for a tense hour. She, too, had marked the time; it had been on the verge of twenty minutes after eight as she left the store. "What right has the only doctor in the country to play chess, anyway? And with old Hell-fire Packard at that? Two precious old rascals they are, I'll be bound. But a rascal of a doctor is better than no doctor at all, and— Ah, a good, open bit of road!"

The car leaped to fresh speed under her. She glanced at her speedometer; the needle was wavering between twenty-seven and

thirty miles. She narrowed her eyes upon the road; it invited; she shoved the throttle on her wheel a little further open; thirty miles, thirty-three, thirty-five—forty, forty-five—there she kept it for a moment—only a moment it seemed to her breathless impatience, for next came a series of curves where her road, rising, went over the first ridge of hills and where, on either hand, danger lurked.

Beyond the ridge the road straightened out suddenly. Better time now: twenty-five miles, thirty, thirty-five—and then, down in the valley, forty-five miles, fifty, fifty-five—her horn blaring, sending far and wide its defiant, warning echoes, her headlights flashing across trees, fences, patches of brush and rolling hills—sixty miles.

"If my tires only stick it out—they ought to—this road hasn't a sharp rock on it."

But from sixty miles she must pull down sharply. Far ahead something was across the road—perhaps only a shadow, perhaps a tangible barrier; she didn't know these roads any too well.

She cut off her power, jammed on foot and emergency brakes and so came to a stop just in time. Here a fence stretched across the road; the tall gate throwing its black shadows on the white moonlit soil was not five feet from her hood when she stopped.

She jumped down, threw the gate wide open, propped it back with a stone, knowing full well how the farmers and cattlemen thereabouts builded their gates to shut automatically, drove through in such haste that she grazed the gate itself and so jarred it into closing behind her, and was again glancing from road to speedometer—twenty-five, thirty-five, a turn to negotiate, seen far ahead, dropping back to twenty-five, to twenty. A straight, alluring stretch—twenty-five, thirty-five, forty-five, fifty, fifty-five, sixty, sixty-two, sixty-three—the far rim of the valley, another line of hills black under the stars—fifty again and down to twenty-five, to twenty, her horn blowing as she sped into the mouth of the first cañon.

And again, when at last she was down in old man Packard's valley and within hailing distance of his misshapen monster of a house, she set her horn to blaring like the martial trumpet of an invading army. Cattle and horses along her road awoke from their dozing in the moonlight, perhaps leaped to the conclusion that it was old Hell-fire himself in their midst, flung their tails aloft and scampered to right and left.

Finally Terry's car stood in front of Packard's door—right square in front of the door so that Terry herself could jump from her running-board, and so that her front wheels were planted firmly in the old man's choice bed of roses. There were two flat tires, punctured on the way—two ruined, battered rims; her tank still held perhaps a gallon of gasoline. But she had arrived.

Before she leaped out, Terry had glanced at her clock. She had made the trip of forty miles in exactly fifty-three minutes. Considering the state of the roads—

"Not bad," admitted Terry.

THEN, with a final clarion call of her horn, she presented herself at Packard's door. She got a few of the wildest blown wisps of brown hair back where they belonged before the door opened. She heard hurrying feet and prepared herself, by a visible stiffening, for the coming of the arch villain himself. There was a sense of disappointment when she saw that it was only the dwarfed henchman come in the master's stead. Guy Little stared at her in pure surprize.

"Terry Temple, ain't it?" gasped the mechanician. "For the love of Pete!"

"I want Doctor Bridges," said Terry quickly. "He's here, isn't he?"

Guy Little, instead of making a prompt and direct answer, presented as puzzled a countenance as the girl ever saw. He was in slippers and shirt-sleeves; he had a large volume which, in his hands, appeared little less than huge; his hair was as badly towseled as Terry's own; his eyes were frankly bewildered. Terry spoke again impatiently:

"Answer me and don't gawk at me! Is the doctor here?"

"For the love of Pete!" was quite all that Guy Little offered in response.

She sniffed and pushed by him, standing in the hallway and, for the first time in her life, fairly in the lion's den. She looked about her with lively interest.

"Say," said Little then. "Hold on a minute."

He came quietly close to her, his slippered feet falling soundlessly.

"Doc Bridges is in there with the ol' man." He jerked his head toward the big

library and living-room whose door stood closed in their faces. "They're playin' chess. Unless your sick man's dyin', I guess you better wait until they get through. Even if he is dyin'——"

"I'll do nothing of the kind!" retorted Terry emphatically. "When I've raced all the way from Red Creek, banging my car all up, risking my precious life every jump of the way, doing the trip in fifty-three minutes, do you think that——"

"Hey?" cried Guy Little. "How's that? How many minutes? Fifty-three, you said, didn't you? Fifty-three minutes from Red Crick to here? Hey?"

"Is the man crazy?" demanded Terry. "Didn't I say I did? I could have done it in less, too, only with a flat tire and——"

"Hey?" repeated Guy Little, over and over. "You done that? Hey? You say——"

"I say," cut in Terry starting toward the closed door, "that there is a man sick and a doctor wanted."

"Oh, can that part of it!" cried Little, coming after her again in his excitement. "Chuck it! Forget it! The thing is that you made the run from there to here—an' in the night time—an' with tire trouble an'——"

"Doctor Bridges——"

"Is in there, like I said. Playin' chess with the ol' man. You don't know what that means. I do. Mos' usually, askin' a lady's pardon for the way of sayin' it, it means ——. Capital H. An' tonight the ol' man has got the door locked an' he's two games behind an' he's sore as a hoot owl an' he says that anybody as breaks in on his play is— No, I can't say it—not in the presence of a lady. There's times when the ol' man is so awful vi'lent he's —— near vile about it. Get me?"

"Guy Little, you just stand aside!" Terry's eyes blazed into his as she threw out a hand to thrust his back. "I came for the doctor and I'm going to get him."

Guy Little merely shook his head.

"You don't know the ol' man," he said quietly. "An' I do. I'm the only man, woman or child livin' as does know him. You stan' aside."

He stepped quickly by her and rapped at the door. When only silence greeted him he rapped again. Now suddenly, explosively, came old man Packard's voice, fairly quivering with rage as the old man shouted:

"If that's you, Guy Little, I'll beat your head off'n your fool body! Get out an' go away an' for the love of Mike go fast!"

"It's important, your majesty," returned Guy Little's voice imperturbably.

He rubbed one slippered toe against his calf and winked at Terry, looking vastly innocent and boyish.

"I'm pullin' for you," he whispered. "There's jus' one way to do it." Aloud he repeated. "It's important, your majesty, an' there's a lady here."

"Lady?" shouted the old man, his voice fairly breaking with the emotion that went into it. "Lady? In my house? What do you mean?" Then, without waiting for an answer, "I don't care who she is or what she is or what the two of you want. Get out! This fool pill-roller in here thinks he can beat me playin' chess; you're in league with him to distract me, you traitor!"

Guy Little smiled broadly and winked again.

"Ain't he got the manner of a dook?" he whispered admiringly. And to his employer, "Say, Packard, it's the little Temple girl—Terry Temple, you know. An'——"

"What?"

Even Terry started and drew back a quick step from the closed door. She did not know that a man's voice could pierce to one's soul like that.

"An'," went on Guy Little hurriedly, knowing that he must rush his words now if he got them out at all, "she's jus' drove all the way from Red Crick—in a Boyd-Merril, twin eight car—had tire trouble on the road—an' done the trip in fifty-three minutes!"

He got it all out. A deep silence shut down after his words. A silence during which a man's eyes might have opened and stared, during which a man's mouth, too, might have opened and closed wordlessly, during which a man's brain might estimate what this meant—to drive forty miles in fifty-three minutes over such roads as lay between the Packard ranch and Red Creek.

"It's a lie!" shouted Packard. "She couldn't do it."

"I want Dr. Bridges——"

"Sh!" Guy Little cut her short. "I got the ol' boy on the run. Leave it to me." And aloud once more, "She done it. She can prove it. An'——"

There came a snort of fury from the

locked room, followed by the noise of a chess-board and set of men hurled across the room and by an old man's voice shouting fiercely:

"It's a —— frame up. Bridges, you're a scoundrel and I can beat you any three games out of five and I'll bet you ten thousan' dollars on it, any time! An', as for that thief of a Temple's squidge-faced girl— Come in! —— it all, come in and be done with it!"

And, as he unlocked the door with a hand that shook, and flung it wide open, he and Terry Temple confronted each other for the first time.

CHAPTER XIX

THE man never yet lived and knew old man Packard who would have suggested that he was not a good and thorough-going hater. His enemy and all of his enemy's household, wife and child, maid-servant and man-servant, were, to him, all as the spawn of Satan.

Now he stood back, his face flushed, his two hands on his hips, his beard thrust forward belligerently and fairly seeming to bristle. Terry Temple, her heart beating like mad all of a sudden and for no reason which she would admit to herself, lifted her head and stepped across the threshold defiantly. For a very tense moment the two of them, old man and young girl, stared at each other.

Doctor Bridges still sat at the chess-table, his mouth dropping open, his expression one of pure consternation; Guy Little stood in the doorway just behind Terry, rubbing a slippered toe against his leg and watching interestedly.

"So you're Temple's girl, are you?" snorted the old man. "Well, I might have guessed it!"

And the manner of the statement, rather than the words themselves, was very uncomplimentary to Miss Teresa Arriega Temple.

And as a mere matter of fact—and old man Packard knew it well enough down in his soul—he would have guessed nothing of the sort. So long had he held her in withering contempt, just because of her relationship to her father, so long had he invested her with all thinkably distasteful attributes, so long had he in his out-of-hand way named her squidge-nosed, putty-faced, pig-eyed and so on, that in due course he had really formed his own image of her.

And now, suddenly confronted by the most amazingly pretty girl he had ever seen, he managed to snort that she was just what he knew she was, and, in the snorting, no one knew better than Old Man Packard that, as he could have put it himself, he lied like a horse-thief.

Terry had seen him once when she was a very little girl. He had been pointed out to her by one of her father's cowboys who, for reasons of his own, heartily hated and a little feared the old man. Since then the girl's lively imagination had created a most unseemly brute out of the enemy of her house, a beetle-browed, ugly-mouthed, facially hideous being little short of a monstrosity.

And now Terry's fine feminine perception was begrudingly forced to set about constructing a new picture. The old man, black-hearted villain that he was, was the most upstanding, heroic figure of a man that she had ever seen.

Beside him Doctor Bridges was a spectacle of physical degeneracy while Guy Little became a grotesque dwarf. The grandfather was much like the grandson, and—though she vowed to like him the less for it—was in his statuesque, leonine way quite the handsomest thing she had ever looked on.

Perhaps it was at just the same instant that each realized that rather too great an interest had been permitted to go into a long, searching look. For Terry suddenly affected a look of supreme contempt, while the old man jerked his eyes away, transferring his regard to the serene Guy Little.

"You said, Guy Little——"

"Yes, sir, I said it!" Guy Little nodded vigorously. "Them forty miles in fifty-three minutes—in the dark—an' with tire trouble. It's a record. The best you ever done it in was fifty-seven minutes. She beat you four minutes. Her!"

He indicated Terry.

"Doctor Bridges—" began Terry.

"It's a lie!" cried the old man, smashing the table top with a clenched fist. "I don't care who says it; she couldn't do it! No girl could; no Temple could. It ain't so!"

"Call me a liar?" cried Terry, a sudden flaming, surging, hot current in her cheeks, her eyes blazing. "You are a horrid old

man. I always knew it, but you are a lot horrider than I thought you were. And—you just call me a liar again, Hell-fire Packard, and I'll slap your face for you!"

For a moment the old man stood towering over her, looking down with blazing eyes into eyes which blazed back, a little tremor visibly shaking him as if he were tempted to lay his hands on her. A bright, almost eager fearlessness shone in her eyes.

"I dare you," said Terry. "Old man that you are, I'll slap you so that you'd know who it is you're insulting. Pirate!" she flung at him. "And land-hog— Oh!

"Doctor Bridges, you are to come with me right now." She had flung about, giving her shoulder to Packard's inspection. "We must hurry back to Red Creek."

"Say, Packard," chimed in Guy Little, "her car's all shot to ——. An' her gas is all gone. An' her ol' man is awful sick in Red Creek. You understan'——"

"What's it got to do with me?" boomed Hell-fire Packard. "What do I care whether her old thief of a father dies tonight or next week? What do I——"

"Aw, rats," grunted Guy Little. "What's eatin' you, Packard? Listen to me: She says how she done it in fifty-three minutes an' you can't do it any better'n fifty-seven; how you ain't no dead-game sport noways; how she's short of change but would bet a man fifty dollars you couldn't an' wouldn't."

"She said them things?"

"I—" began Terry.

"She did!" answered Guy Little hastily.

"Bridges," snapped old Packard, "grab your hat an' black poison-bag an' be ready in two minutes." Packard was on his way to the door. "Guy Little, you get my car at the front door—quick! An' as for you—" He was at the door and half turned to stare angrily into Terry's eyes—"You can do what you please. I'm goin' to take the only pill-slinger in the country to the worst ol' thief I ever heard of."

"I'm going back with you," said Terry briefly.

Old man Packard shrugged.

"If you ain't scared," he grunted, "to ride alongside a man as swears, so help him——, in spite of smash-bang-an'-be- ——, is goin' to make that little run back to Red Creek—in less'n fifty minutes!"

"MIND you," said old man Packard at the front door, his eye stony as it marked how Terry's car stood among his choice roses, "I ain't doin' this because I got any use for a Temple, he or she—especially she. An' before we start let me tell you one more thing: You keep your two han's off'n my gran'son!"

"What!" gasped Terry.

"I said it," he fairly snorted. "Come on there, Guy Little, with that car. Ready there, Bridges, you ol' fool? Pile in!"

He took his seat at the wheel, his old black hat pushed far back on his head, his eye already on the clock in the dash. Terry slipped ahead of Dr. Bridges and took her seat at the old man's side.

"You said—just what?" she demanded icily.

"I said," he cried savagely, "as I know how you been chasin' my fool of a gran'son, Stephen, an' as how you got to stop it."

Terry sat rigid, speechless, grown suddenly cold. For once in her life no ready answer sprang to her lips.

Then Hell-fire Packard had started his engine, sounded his horn, and they were on their way. And Terry, because no words would come, put her head back and laughed in a way that, as she knew perfectly well, would madden him.

THE drive from Hell-fire Packard's front door to the store in Red Creek was made in some few negligible seconds over forty-eight minutes. The three occupants of the car reached town alive; the car itself was in condition for the return drive. Never in her life after that night would Terry Temple doubt that that there was a providence which at critical times took into its hands the destinies of men.

There had been never a word spoken until they came to the gate which had closed behind Terry on the way out. She saw his hands tighten on his wheel.

"Set tight an' hang on," he had commanded sharply.

The big front tires and bumper struck the gate; there was a wild flying of splinters and, at sixty miles an hour, they went through and on to Red Creek.

"The old devil!" whispered Terry within herself. "The old devil!"

(TO BE CONCLUDED)

Author of "The Dance of the Golden Gods," The Lure of the Lode," etc.

NOW if the jedge hadn't been nuts on fly-fishin' there wouldn't have been no trouble at all. In the next place, if Myron D. Trottman, who owns the Bluehole River, hadn't been so all-fired richer-than-thou on week-days an' so gol-blamed holier-than-thou on Sundays, there wouldn't be such fat fishin' right now in that brook, since the jedge put a kink in the plutocrat's rights. Last evenin' I took seventeen speckled beauties out o' one hole inside a half-hour, an' not one less 'n a half-pound each. I could 'a' took a cart-load, but what's the use? I ain't no hog even if Myron D. is—or tried to be.

It's like this. Myron D. Trottman somehow gets away with a tract o' land on some old option or morgidge or somethin'. That was before the State got busy and copped off the rest for the commun peepul an' busted up a few o' them option deals, too. But Myron D.—made millions in tallow candles, he did—manages to hold on and puts the padlocks on the Bluehole River from the p'int where it goes into his tract to the p'int where it flows out. Besides that, he makes dams for the trout to lie in, so they just stays there and don't bother much to move up or down-stream. Furthermore an' to wit, as the jedge would say, he has special game-wardens that gets tin badges somehow and is called deppity sheriffs.

It's all pretty tough on us that's been rangin' Ad'rondack waters as much as we likes, with more or less regard for laws. I'm not sayin' I hain't took a few fish out of Trottman's brook when I needed 'em, an' wunst or twicet I've had a run-in with them deppities. But usually I took along some sheriff-bait, an' not in cans either, an' got away with it.

I weren't born an' raised in these woods to let my rights slip up jest because a blame millionaire diddles the State and the peepul out of a hunder thousan' acres of good fishin' an' huntin'. Many's a party I've guided through there an' brought them out with a pack-basket o' fish or shoulderin' a ten-prong buck, them never knowin' to this day they'd been poachin' on privit lands. If they'd 'a' been caught they'd 'a' knowed it, but it was up to me to see they weren't.

Well, along about last July up comes old Jedge Blackstone from Uticy an' hires me to show him some good fishin'. He didn't care how fur he had to travel or how rough the goin' was, s'long as I got him away from brooks that's been fished till a seven-inch trout is a prize.

"Nothin' under ten inches, Jim Divver," ses the jedge.

"Ye're on," ses I, thinkin' o' the Bluehole River.

Of course, I didn't say nothin' else to the jedge. What was the use? I believe in lettin' a party enjoy his fishin' without addin' any to the wettin' he may get, anyway. So I takes him into the woods and, after totin' over no end o' carries, pitches camp in a neck o' State woods not fur from the Bluehole.

Never seen the jedge, hev ye? If ye had, ye'd know it. He's a S'preme Court jedge, but ye'd never think it to see him stripped. He's about sixty, a little bit of a man, thin as a rail, with a head on him like a blame pollywog's—all head, by ginger!—an' side-whiskers like a catfish.

Ye'd laugh to see him whippin' a brook. Wadin' boots? No, sir! Strips his pants off an' gets right in up to the waist. It's the hardest work gettin' him to wear decent clo'es when he's in the woods. If ye was to show me that old white-whiskered sport stickin' half-way out of a trout-hole an' tell me he's a S'preme Court jedge, I'd say, not knowin' the facks, you was a dog-gone liar.

Well, next mornin' the jedge an' me goes fishin'. We travels to the Bluehole through the State woods which touches the river about a quarter-mile below Trottman's line. I takes the guide-boat along and we rows up to where the dam stops us. There we ties up, takes the tackle an' wades up through the millionaire's estate.

Some fishin'! Mornin', evenin' or middle-day—bright or dull—it's jest the same: Ye couldn't drop a string o' flies without havin' an argument right away. There weren't no throw-backs either. Little trout didn't seem to have a chance to assoshate with grown-ups in that brook. The jedge's creel was full-up in no time, an' we was just goin' to call it a mornin' when his honor slips on a rock an' lams head-first into the water.

He must 'a' been under water half an hour. Leastways it was that long to me. There was his creel floatin' around, an' out of it was streamin' live trout an' dead trout an' trout that was only half-dead an' come to pretty quick.

Then the jedge's whiskers come on top an' a skinny arm reaches out for that creel. He was wearin' a bathin'-suit that day, in case he got a wettin'. Well, ye should 'a' heard his langwidge when he found just two trout left in that creel. Even the dead ones was a quarter-mile down the rapids by now.

"Too bad, jedge," ses I.

"——!" ses the jedge—jest like that he ses it. "That don't matter, Jim." He'd sort of got over his cussin'. "We'll jest have the fun of ketchin' another mess."

He sure was some sport for sixty and side-whiskers.

Well, he climbs out an' gives his flies a whisk into that same pool he'd fell into. Maybe he hoped to ketch back some o' them that got out of the creel. But first crack out of the box there's a swirl an' a lam-blam-splash, an' I sees the jedge has hooked a daddy. Jest like the nerve of it, too, to stay pat in that hole where the jedge had been floppin' around.

Some fish, I tell ye! He took up the entire hole, fightin'. The jedge plays him like an old-timer an' all the time talkin' at that three-pounder—oh, he were all o' that!—like he was a personal friend he'd wagered he could get the best of in a game.

Well, jest as he was bringin' that big fellow to net there's a cracklin' in the woods an' I sees one o' Myron D.'s deppities comin' on the run.

"BEAT it, jedge!" I whispers. "Leave the trout an' beat it!"

"What!" yells the jedge, his eyes poppin' on that big fellow rollin' like a chunk o' rainbow near the surface. "What 'd I leave him for? Are ye crazy?"

I couldn't run an' leave my party, so I has to stick by an' go to jail maybe along of the jedge. An' jest then the deppity comes to the bank an' bawls out—

"Ye're under arrest—both o' ye!"

"Go away! Shut up! Don't interrup' me! Go away!" yells the jedge, still bringin' that walloper to net.

"Jedge," I whispers, "we're on a private stream!"

"We're what?" cries the jedge, holdin' the fish for jest a second while he stares at me an' then at the deppity who's stannin' on the bank with a di'bolical grin on his face.

"Come ashore, both o' ye!" ses he.

"Certainly! Certainly!" ses the jedge, all at once cool as ye like. "One moment, please, before court adjourns."

Then, blamed if he doesn't net that big trout an', without takin' the fish from the net or unhitchin' the tangled flies, he tucks the whole business—rod an' all—under one arm and begins to streak it down that stream.

"Come on, Jim!" ses he, flounderin' an' splashin' ahead of me.

"Stop! Stop!" yells the deppity. "Ye're under arrest! Didn't I tell ye ye're under arrest?"

"I heard ye!" ses the jedge, flounderin' through a pool that was over his depth, but still holdin' on to fish, net an' tackle clamped under his left arm.

Well, I never see anything so funny, although it was blame serious right at the time. That old whiskery jedge in his bathin'-suit beat it like a wounded duck, flappin' and splashin', half swimmin', half runnin' down that stream, me makin' fairly good time ahynt him, while the deppity, who maybe didn't care to get his clo'es wet or tackle two of us in mid-stream, runs along the bank, tellin' us over an' over that we're under arrest an' ought to be good an' come ashore.

But we makes the dam first, tumbles over it an' into the guide-boat. I was for waitin' now we was on the State side of the line, an' tellin' the deppity some things, but the jedge makes me untie and beat it before the game-warden has a good look at him.

"I'm a Supreme Court justice, James!" he groans.

Well, we gets back to camp in the State woods, an' the jedge is a different man right away. He gives me blue blazes!

What the —— do I mean gettin' him mixed up in poachin'? Do I know he's a man sworn under oath to enforce the laws made an' providin' for society, decency, property and propriety? Is this what he's payin' me four dollars a day for—to get him, a S'preme Court justice, fined or locked up for poachin'?

But all the time he is cussin' me, he's disentanglin' that whopper from the landin'-net. He holds up that fish presently and stares at it.

"Jumpin' Jerusalem, Jim!" he fair gasps. "Get the fish-scale!"

Well, that fish weighs three pounds, ten ounces. Some speckled trout! The jedge is tickled to death for a minnit, but then he begins cussin' again.

"It's just a dead fish," ses he. "It's no trophy. It's poached. Oh, —— the luck! If I'd caught a trout like that on the square——"

Then he lets loose on me again. I lets him rip away. I ain't got a thing to say, excep' that we got away with it an' had the sport. That cools him a bit, an' he begins to ask for details. Who owns the blame place anyway?

When I tells him it's the tallow-candle man, Myron D. Trottman, he looks up kinda sharp—like he's been dozin' on the bench an' hears a witness say somethin' interestin'.

"Myron D. Trottman?" he snaps.

"That's him," ses I.

"Hmm! Hah! Huh!" ses the jedge.

"That selfish grabber of the world's good things. Ah!—now I understand. Lucky I wasn't caught. Would ha' spelled ruin. Hates me, he does—ever since my ruling that the State owned the tract. I was reversed—but no matter. Hasn't forgotten it. By the lord Harry——"

He suddenly turned to me with a queer light in his eye an' gives his left side-whisker a vicious tug.

"Why—why—that accounts for it. I'm glad this happened, Jim Divver—delighted!"

After the way he'd cussed me out I'm some surprized.

"Glad to hear it, jedge," ses I.

"It's like this, Jim," ses he. "A short time ago I heard of the excellent fishing on Trottman's estate and that a permit might be obtained. Wrote from Utica to the agent and was refused. The refusal was a bit satirical. I see that now. I'd clean forgotten I ruled against him in a title case—this same tract, by thunder!

"The agent replied—and I'll wager Trottman was at his elbow—that he did not allow fishing on Sundays, and on other days of the week fishing privileges were extended only to guests of the Bluehole River Inn, also owned by Trottman. He added that if his honor, Justice Blackstone, desired, he'd arrange a special rate of four and a half dollars a day at the inn.

"——his insolence!" the jedge explodes. "But I was a fool to ask a permit—to have forgotten——"

And then he falls into a rage at me, Trottman, his agent, his deppity—all creation; but every now an' then he lets up a bit to admire that wallopin' trout.

Well, that day—a Saturday it was—when I come in from cuttin' wood I finds the jedge dressed in clo'es. I knew right away somethin' serious was wrong.

"Jim," ses he, "we'll go right into Saranac at once. My business there will take just five minutes, but we'll sleep in the village an' come back in tomorrow morning."

I ses nothin' but makes the start. All the way by boat an' carry he doesn't say a blame word, actin' as glum as if he was tryin' a murder case. Yet I knew he'd put that big trout in the pack-basket.

We spent the night in Saranac after I'd got some odd supplies I'd forgot. The jedge was absent a while, taking the big trout with him. When he comes back he

hasn't the trout but carries a big yaller book which he sits up half the night readin' in. In the mornin' I packs up for the return trip.

Among the things he tells me to put in the pack is two half-pint flasks of whisky, which I'm right glad to see, the jedge being a teetotaler himself. But as it turns out I don't get a sniff of that liquor. He holds out the book, an' all the way back to camp he's still readin' in it. Only after we arrives does he shut it with a slam, eat about two dozen flapjacks an' then remark, quite casual:

"Jim, this is Sunday. We are going fishing on Myron D. Trottman's estate. We shall take the boat. I'm not as young as I was, and the wading—rheumatism, you know."

Goin' fishin' again on Trottman's preserve—in a boat—on Sunday!

I stares at him.

"Jedge," ses I, "hev ye went crazy?"

"Argument denied!" snaps the jedge, an' I shuts up.

WELL, we goes fishin' again that afternoon. It's courtin' jail, but I has some extenooation when a S'preme Court jedge is responsible for my doin's.

We rows up to the dam an' the jedge tells me to haul the boat over. I does as I'm told. We rows farther up into Trottman's waters, while the jedge sits in the stern in a bathin'-suit. He must 'a' expected company—laughin' an' talkin' out loud in a way that makes me nervous. Sound travels in them woods.

When we get to the first falls we ties up so as not to scare the trout, an' the judge—rheumatiz be blowed!—takes to the water with the tackle. I follows, totin' the pack-basket. We keeps to the shallows, castin' into the deep water, an' them trout need no second invite.

In a half-hour we has our baskets full, but the jedge, not satisfied, tightens the band of his bathin'-trunks an' begins to load up the inside of his jersey. I bust out laughin' at the sight o' that skinny little man bulgin' with trout. He snaps at me an' orders me to tear out the pockets from my coat an' slip trout into the linin'.

Inside an hour we're fair staggerin' with trout, an' I think the jedge is sure nutty.

About this time the same deppity turns up.

"Good evening, my friend," ses the jedge.

"The same to you," ses the deppity, grinnin'. "I got ye this time—second offense, too, besides fishin' on Sunday. I been watchin' ye for an hour, an' there's a couple o' my partners headin' ye off back there at the dam."

"Admirable strategy and forethought," ses the Jedge. "Seeing, however, as you've caught us with the goods on, so to speak, you won't mind if we come to the close of a perfect day. They're biting something wonderful."

"Go as fur as ye like," ses the deppity, sittin' down on the bank an' fillin' his pipe. "We get ye when ye're through."

"In the meantime," ses the jedge, nettin' a nice one-pounder, "Jim, I think, has a little flask in the pack-basket. Have a little drink on me."

Then I sees why he brought along some of the fiend. That old sport was wise to sheriff-bait. I dug up one of the flasks from under the trout an' handed it to the jedge, who tosses it to the deppity.

"Excuse me if I don't seem to join you," ses the jedge. "It gives me dyspepsia."

Well, the deppity takes a swig, remarkin' somethin' about doin' his dooty an' no hard feelin's etcetery. He doesn't throw the flask back for fear of hittin' a rock, an' by and by I sees him take another swig. He keeps on goin' at intervals. He gets kinda talky an' tells the jedge he's reel sorry for him an' he'd let him down easy if —well, if he could. The jedge doesn't bite, but seein' the half-pint's gettin' low he tells me to dig up the second flask.

"Your partners, possibly," ses he, "back down at the dam. It's weary waiting."

"Right you are," ses the deppity, ketchin' the second flask. "I'll keep it for them. But ye don't ketch me goin' down to the dam till you go, too. Then we'll have a real nice little party. He, he, he!"

All this time the jedge is coolly hookin' an' playin' an' nettin' trout. He keeps it up while the deppity sneaks into the second flask and begins whistlin' something that sounds like "Annie Laurie" on one o' her off nights.

By an' by that deppity is so overcome with waitin' that he begins to nod an' at last drops off to sleep at the foot of the tree where he is settin'. His last words is:

"Un'stan' me, now. Y'r' un'r 'rres'——"

Then the jedge acts more looney than ever. Out o' his flybook he takes a stub pencil an' a visitin'-card with his name an' S'preme Court justice and his Uticy address an' all the rest printed on it. He writes somethin' on the card an' shakes with laughin'. At first he's goin' to wade ashore an' pin it on the deppity's coat, but he changes his mind an' tells me to cut a stick an' make a cleft on one end.

He sticks the card in the cleft and then tells me to jam the other end in the bank, right close to the deppity, at the same time warnin' me not to step on shore.

Then we wades the stream to the boat. We rows farther down and, sure enough, there's a couple more deppities campin' for us on the wall o' the dam.

The jedge is p'lite as can be, remarkin' it's a fine evenin' an' the flies ain't bitin' half as much as the trout.

"Ye're arrested!" announces the deppities, both to wunst.

"I know it," ses the Jedge. "I yield to the decrees of fate and the law. I submit."

Then out again comes the flybook an' the stub-pencil an' a visitin' card, an' again he scribbles somethin' on it.

"I suppose," ses he, "you will want my name and address. Here it is. My guide here, Jim Divver, you probably know. We can be reached at any time with the court summons."

Well, the deppities takes the card and puts their heads together an' reads all that's on it. Then they scratches their heads an' looks at each other an' at the jedge. Maybe they remembered the title case; maybe not. Anyway it wasn't every day they arrested a jedge of the Supreme Court for poachin' an'—well, there was somethin' about the jedge that was bigger than jest a little man with hardly nothin' on excep' whiskers.

"All right," ses one o' the deppities. "We'll hand this to the manager an' ye'll hear from him pretty quick. That your camp over in the State woods there?"

"The same," ses the Jedge. "We'll be there for several days, the fishing is so excellent. By the way," he adds, fishin' a couple o' trout from inside his bathin'-suit, "here is something you may need as material evidence."

Then he gets into the boat which I've hauled over the dam while they're talkin' an' we rows away from there, them deppities so flabbergasted they jest stan' on the wall o' the dam, one holdin' the card atween his thumb an' forefinger, the other danglin' the samples of poached trout, an' both starin' pop-eyed after the jedge, as much as to say: Kin ye beat that?

WELL, after supper that night, I can't hold in any longer.

"Jedge," ses I, "what did ye write on them cards?"

Ses the jedge:

"I merely drew Mr. Myron D. Trottman's attention to section something, article umpteenth."

I forget jest what the number was myself. Anyway they didn't help me none till the Jedge gets over a fit o' shakin' an' ses:

"You see, Jim, this neck of the State lands happens to touch on the Bluehole River. We entered the river from the people's estate and, returning, emerged from it at the same point. For the rest, we trespassed at no time upon the complainant's land, not even to get that card to our bibulous friend under the tree, confining ourselves to a navigable river which is the property of God and the perpetual lease of His people; so that under section something and article umpteenth we were perfectly within the law and our rights as citizen-fishermen."

But all at once something seemed to bother the jedge. He gives his left whisker a yank, which is a sure sign he's up again a problem in law.

"Unfortunately, Jim Divver," ses he, after a bit, "now I come to think of it, in establishing one point of law we have run afoul of another. If we have a right to take trout from the Bluehole at all, we then come under the fish and game laws of the State, which allow only ten pounds of trout per man, per day, or twenty pounds per day for two men in a boat.

"Jim, you'd better pick out the best twenty pounds from the mess. Or, better still, add twenty pounds more for yesterday's fishing, which was also quite legal, deducting therefrom three pounds, ten ounces for the big fellow which I took occasion yesterday to deposit with a taxidermist at Saranac to be mounted.

"The rest, residue and remainder, James, you may—er—fry."

The Wizardry of Fear

by Robert J. Pearsall

Author of "Silver Sycees," "The Eight Vultures of Kwang Ho," etc.

IT'S TRUE that in Shensi anything might happen—even that which did happen. There are certain other parts of China of which the same might be said, the vast, swarming, indefinite inertia to the east cutting them off completely from the world's highway. The resistance of this human barrier is the more powerful because it is absolutely passive, like a morass. Indifferent, self-sufficient and inscrutable, the people vie in their attitude with their impossible roads, unrepaired for a thousand years, in heaping up discouragements for the traveler.

Behind this is a gray, dim land, weird, unknown and unknowing. Bordering Tibet there is a population of ten million who have never heard of the Great War. Not quite as isolated as this is Shensi, but the province has endured five thousand years without a post-office. The Pekingese speak of it as a foreign country. In this the wish possibly fathers the thought, for Shensi has long been a fermenting pot of trouble. Many times, great revolutions, social maelstroms have risen there, remaining unchecked and possibly unheard of by Peking, until perhaps, as has happened twice, they swept across the Empire and turned it upside down.

So in Shensi anything might be hidden—even the thing that Hazard and I indisputably found—and that in spite of the fact that civilization of a sort was ancient there when Romulus and Remus were being nursed by a wolf. And when Hazard, who is at once one of the most logical and imaginative of men, reminds me that the part of our experience that I deny would hardly be more remarkable in our day than was the use of the decimal system in Shensi three thousand years ago, I can hardly dispute it. And yet——

Where there can be a natural and known explanation of a thing, I prefer it. And there was nothing stable in Sadafuki's government of that secret valley which Hazard and I discovered far down in the Tsingling range—nothing that couldn't have been destroyed, as it was destroyed—nothing that would have survived the breaking of the chains of fear.

Indeed, Sadafuki's first remark, when Hazard and I were brought into his presence, was characteristic of a quality that always contains within itself the germs of ruin.

"You think," he inquired, coldly egotistical, "that I can use you?"

And that in spite of the fact that we were wearing the borrowed indentities of men for whom he had sent all the way to Peking—men whose knowledge was presumably needed by the Ko Lao Hui in its vast conspiracy of warfare.

The room in which he received us was octagonal in shape, the first floor of a five-storied *dagoba* that stood at the lower end of the valley. Each of the eight walls was decorated—if the word is permissible—by a great silk banner on which was embroidered

the horrible reputed likeness of Koshinga, head of the society. Sadafuki sat in a beautifully carved teak-wood chair which stood on a platform in the very center of the room.

He was a peculiar mixture of races. His pale, yellowish skin, smooth as fine lacquer, and his small, intensely bright, slightly oblique eyes were all that indicated the Chinese in him. His high cheek-bones and brutal jaw suggested a throwback to the ancient Scythian strain, the utterly incorrigible *hia jen*, or "bad men," who still persist in the northwestern provinces. His name, of course, more than hinted Japanese.

Possibly he got his stature—he was larger than either Hazard or I—and his high, brooding forehead, from the Slav. In spite of this conglomeration of bloods, there was a suggestion of culture about him—or rather a slight, evanescent impression of a culture that had been and was gone. He spoke English with peculiar fluency, considering where we'd found him.

Hazard and I were still standing. There are certain breaches of courtesy which may not be overlooked in the Orient without stamping oneself as inferior, a sad enough mistake anywhere. Consequently, we paid absolutely no attention to Sadafuki's question. He glared at us for a moment, beholding, I believe, two men who, whatever their feelings, showed no signs of anxiety. Then a more reasonable look came slowly into his eyes. He smiled, though rather grimly, waved his hand, and two of the six soldiers who stood tensely watching him just within the arched doorway ran forward, placed two low chairs for us and retired on the double.

BEFORE I sat down, I handed Sadafuki our stolen credentials, a letter from Li Fu Ching, head of the Peking branch of the Ko Lao Hui. He took the letter, read it slowly and put it carefully inside his wonderfully embroidered blue silk robe. A great bundle of keys, hung on a yellow cord around his waist, jimgled as he did so.

"You are chemists," he stated, slightly more tolerantly.

"Yes."

"American chemists—so you are from America. It was there I began—" He checked himself and resumed his arrogant manner.

"The work in which you were to help is done," he said.

My first feeling at this announcement was one of relief. There are few things of which I know less than chemistry, and Hazard had been no better equipped than I to play the rôle. The risk we were taking in this exploit had only been justified by the value of the information it promised to give us. For a long time Hazard and I had been trying hard for that which we seemed to have attained—entrance into one of the secret places of that infamous society, stronger than ever the Triad was, which seemed to have attained the domination of all western China and had as its avowed end the domination of the world.

"You secured other help, perhaps," suggested Hazard in his pleasantly good-humored voice, scholarly always, but now most deceptively forceless, almost immature.

At that a certain huge vanity flitted across and weakened the really strong lines of Sadafuki's face.

"No, no!" he contradicted sharply. "I conceived the idea and I completed it myself. I needed no other help. It was only for technical assistance in compounding—"

He went eagerly into details to explain, to convince us of his self-sufficiency. Though I could understand but few of the chemical terms and symbols he used, at least I could appreciate the fluency with which he used them. Later I was to understand the reason for this. Then it seemed as remarkable as it was repellant that this renegade and enemy of society should possess so much of the scientific education that the Western world alone can give, only to use it ruthlessly against its givers.

That was confessedly the final object of the thing he claimed to have perfected, after, I gathered, years of experiment. Just what his discovery was, he was plainly careful not to tell. There was a certain wildness in his manner the moment he began talking about the thing that even then led me to discredit his pretenses; nevertheless, I was actively curious. Direct questioning would, however, probably only increase the veil of cunning he drew around his words.

"But there may be something else we can do to serve you and the Ko Lao Hui," I suggested as he paused.

Possibly his smile was merely complacent

and triumphant, though I thought I caught a touch of silliness in it, too.

"There remains very little for any one to do. When the sun's in the sky, there's no need of the stars. I'm above all assistance, as I'm above all attack. This thing—didn't I tell you it would make me master of the world?"

Truly, he had told us so several times in his harangue. His extravagance might be a symptom of that which I suspected; again, it might be partly caused by the fact that he was starved for conversation. Already we'd discovered that his talk with the Chinese who surrounded him was confined altogether to giving commands and imposing sentences. And we hadn't yet learned of that other auditor.

I remembered our rôle as loyal members of the Ko Lao Hui and counterfeited astonishment mingled with some little fear.

"And Koshinga!" I exclaimed.

"Oh, Koshinga! After Koshinga, of course." There was, however, little heart in his tone, and there was the suspicion of a smile on his face.

I could feel my pulse beat a little faster. It was clear we had stumbled upon a mammoth egoism. Koshinga, the invisible and unknown intelligence that ruled the ten million members of the Ko Lao Hui, really was a formidable power. If this man planned to supplant him—well, in that case, his aspiration to world mastery was only a repetition of the commonest jargon of the society.

"Koshinga is great. But," I added humbly, "we are very anxious to serve you."

During my speech and in the momentary pause that followed it, I saw a curious change come over Sadafuki's face. First there was a sudden malevolence, a flash of angry memory, and then a cunning look, evil, it seemed to me, as a demon's dream. When he spoke again, thoughtfully, his voice had hardened and grown harsher, as if he meditated a thing worse even than the usual Ko Lao Hui program of ruthlessness.

"I might be able to use you," he admitted. "But to do that I must tell you the secret—the secret of the great weapon."

I could see that Hazard was even more eager than I that he should do so, though to one who didn't know him as well as I his smooth, clerk-like, almost commonplace face would have been absolutely noncommittal. Usually Hazard was well content to let me do the talking while he watched and listened with that uncanny perception of his; but now he broke in with a subtle reminder to Sadafuki of how absolutely we had committed our lives to the Ko Lao Hui. This was somewhat humorous, considering that we were probably its two most dangerous enemies.

I relished rather less his next affirmation, which was that the absolute power Sadafuki had over us might well make it safe for him to trust us. As a matter of fact, he went on to say, if Li Fu Ching hadn't known we were entirely devoted to the cause, it was inconceivable the he would have given us the secret of the valley and sent us there in answer to Sadafuki's request.

At that last argument Sadafuki shrugged his great shoulders and smiled rather disdainfully.

"Li Fu Ching knows that the road into this valley is easier than the road out," he said.

Of course, the fact that our guns had been taken from us immediately when we had entered the place had quite prepared for this intimation that we were prisoners.

"But I have use for you," repeated Sadafuki. "I have thought the thing out and I will tell you, so you may serve the cause and me—" here some suppressed passion seemed to burst beneath his voice and lift it angrily—" for no one shall deny my authority, no one. Not even she!"

"She is of your race," he broke off, half to himself. "She will trust you."

Sometimes I'm inclined to believe in premonition in a very limited sense. At Sadafuki's last muttered words I felt a thrill of horror. But I suppose that was really caused by the unexpected information they contained—that our situation, perilous enough in all conscience, was to be still further complicated by the presence of a woman in the Hidden Valley—a woman, evidently, who had somehow managed to defy Sadafuki.

"There is but one crime, disobedience; and but one punishment, death." Hazard repeated suggestively the first and pretty nearly the only law of the Ko Lao Hui.

"True," said Sadafuki, "she must die; but first she must help me to prove the thing which I already know, but which must be proved. To do that it is necessary that she submit or be overpowered, for it

is a thing that must be handled carefully, like the breath of death. Else you must submit yourselves, for the Chinese are no good for the test as you will understand."

That last statement was indeed true, in the light of what we came to know later of Sadafuki's theory. One can not twice be robbed of the same thing, and already the Chinese were broken by fear.

"We're your servants," said Hazard almost too meekly. "But—since we're to know in the end anyway—who is this person we're to help you with, that she may help you before dying?"

"She was my wife," said Sadafuki calmly.

Luckily at that moment he was looking at Hazard, who has better control over his features than I. But I needn't have been astounded. There are depths below depths of depravity; baseness beyond the comprehension of the normal-minded; there is a devil in this world that destroys humanity like a withering wind, and the name of that devil is Self.

II

BUT I think there is nothing clearer than that nature sets a certain definite limit on one's worship of self, beyond which lies madness, folly and disaster. The reasoning of the complete egoist must be faulty because it is based on a lie. Hence the term egomaniac is usually no exaggeration. By the same rule, nature limits power because it is from overmuch power that egomania always springs. The slave creates the tyrant always.

In the beginning Sadafuki couldn't have been quite normal, else he wouldn't have joined the Ko Lao Hui. But, having joined it, and having been given the mastery of the Hidden Valley, his further development was quite natural. His power was as absolute as could exist on earth. Considering that such power is really self-destructive, this would seem weakness of reasoning on the part of those who had placed him there had it not been that an absolutism was necessary in the very nature of the case.

I'd begun my search for the leadership, the central intelligence, the vulnerable point of the Ko Lao Hui some four months ago. Then I only knew that the society had as its avowed aim the union of all the yellow races in a war of conquest and that, preaching this perverted patriotism, it forced tribute from high and low.

It wasn't until after I'd been joined by Hazard that we came to know through little things overheard in the bazaars, on the streets, in the shops and tea-rooms that the society was actually making certain preparations for this warfare, or at least for some warfare. More likely, of course, the thing would end in aggravated acts of oppression against the Chinese themselves—internecine strife which would still further weaken the empire and encourage the aspirations of her enemies. But at any rate, hidden somewhere in the interior provinces were many great establishments—magazines and other storage-places and even manufactories of war material.

After that, next to discovering the hiding place of the sinister Koshinga, head of the whole movement and—if the central legend of the Ko Lao Hui be true—himself the most fascinating symbol of world empire that has ever existed, our chief desire was to penetrate one of these places.

In that we had finally succeeded.

The two men whose indentities we had stolen to effect this object were, we hoped, safely held prisoners. It had been in Sian-Fu, capital of Shensi, that we met them, suspected their mission, spied upon them and found them out. To get them into our power later had been merely a matter of bribing their servants. After we had them safely in the hills to the south of Sian-Fu, we offered them their traitorous lives—which were really forfeited according to all standards of justice—if they told us the truth and all the truth, and if we—and they—were lucky.

That is, if they furnished us with information that would enable us to enter and return safely from the place where they'd been ordered to report, they would be permitted to live. We promised the men who were to hold them there in the hills an amount equal to that we'd already paid them when they restored the prisoners to us. If we didn't return in a month, their jailors were to dispose of them in the least troublesome manner. It was a hard bargain, but the thing was really a war in which they'd betrayed their race; besides, Hazard and I were matching our lives against theirs. If we didn't return, it would be because we were not alive. This was, of course, no very improbable contingency.

So, equipped with explicit directions, passwords and the letter from Li Fu Ching, we traveled far to the southwest into the barren fastnesses of the Tsingling Mountains. On the summit of China's watershed, where the Yellow and the Yangtse river systems are divided, we found the beginning of a certain river of which the two men had told us. Pack on back and glad of a shot at an occasional crow, we followed down between black, treeless and almost lifeless gorges for five days. At the end of that time the river had grown into a swift and unfordable stream many rods wide. The morning of the sixth day we came to the entrance of the valley, Sadafuki's domain.

This entrance—a masked tunnel into the side of the gorge just above where the river broadened into a great reservoir and then overran an artificial dam, a sheer drop of several hundred feet—was, of course, carefully concealed. The other end of the tunnel opened upon the eastern side of the precipitous ridge that, oval in shape, completely encircled the valley, shutting it off by a barrier nearly a mile high, even from the barrenness that surrounded it. But the valley itself, which was about three miles long and half that distance across its widest point, was very far from barren—a deep *loess* soil carpeted with fields of rice, millet and vegetables that must have made the place very nearly self-sustaining.

All around the valley, at a height of about two hundred yards, there ran a low wall, on the level top of which walked sentries armed with modern-looking rifles. At the very edge of the valley there was a line of interior guards. The space between the two had been carefully razed to afford a clear field of fire.

But Hazard and I were particularly interested in a large, square, wooden building near the bottom of the falls. Piles of fresh lumber lay near it, and a great acreage of tree-stumps bordering the valley to the west showed whence the lumber had come. At the moment when we first observed the building there happened to be filing into it, like a prison chain-gang, a long line of nearly naked Chinese workmen. The sound that came up from the place suggested the humming of a great dynamo, the whirr of many wheels and the gnashing of saws into wood.

We were conducted directly to the lower end of the valley and into the *dagoba*-like building, very near which the river again poured over a precipice in a cataract of foam. This, apparently the home of Sadafuki, was set in the curve of the nearly perpendicular cliff. A light bridge, the purpose of which Hazard and I couldn't then divine, extended from the fifth and topmost floor of the *dagoba* to the face of the rock.

It was, however, plain that the whole valley was a very secure prison.

This, of course, was necessary, considering the purpose of the place, the essence of which was secrecy. It wouldn't have done to have men escaping, blabbing of the work that was being done there. Consequently it was necessary that Sadafuki be given complete, tyrannical power and, having it, it was only natural that he should use it like a tyrant.

The resultant atmosphere pervaded the place like a pestilence. Every one whom Hazard and I observed—our escort, the coolies grubbing in the fields, the armed guards themselves, and there were many of them—all seemed nervous, tense, strung-up with anticipatory terror. They weren't like Chinese at all; their characteristic racial stolidity appeared to have been entirely destroyed. It seemed abnormal, unreal, and, indeed, it proved the prevalence in that valley of punishments harsher than death.

ALL THIS we had seen and felt before meeting Sadafuki and, being quite accustomed to judge the cause from the effect, the revelation of his personality was no great shock to us. I should have been prepared even for his last quoted words. Such men make their own laws, and there is nothing they will not sacrifice to their god. As for what followed—well, was it any wonder if Sadafuki's mind, overbalanced with power, wholly devoted to tyranny, lonely as only the mind of the egoist can be, drove itself deep into the pit of infernal imaginings and produced, as I claim, a vain and foolish thing?

"She was my wife," he had said and we two white men but bowed acquiescence to his proposal that we win her confidence, overpower her and thus help him sacrifice her to we knew not what ordeal.

"But," continued Hazard, "of course we're curious, eager, in fact, to know——"

"You may well be," replied Sadafuki.

"But I've had a second thought. You shall know, but not before you've earned the knowledge. It's not necessary that you should be told, after all, anything except what you are to do. And it's a thing too big, too big——"

I discounted his enthusiasm, of course, but now I can see it was no wonder he was reluctant to give up his secret, for it was—if it had been true—as tremendous a thing as he imagined it, and by its very baseness the more closely related to the soul that had conceived and borne and labored over it in loneliness. I doubt whether he would ever have told us.

"Perhaps," I said carelessly, "it's already been done. Western science has been pretty busy the last few years. It seems to me it's accomplished pretty nearly everything that's possible."

I thought I'd overstepped safety, for Sadafuki's eyes flashed angrily, but he only replied jarringly:

"You speak like a Western scientist—stupidly! To you science is bounded by a close, hard line; it can be nothing but material. That is, what you call material—steel, wood and the like, but even you should know they're not the most important things. What, for instance," he inquired curiously "do you really think is the actual strength of a nation—or an army?"

For that question I had to give him a straight answer.

"Morale," I said. "Courage."

"So!" he agreed swiftly. "You are right."

His anger had quite vanished and now there was a sort of gloating ecstasy on his face.

"And yet how you've but skimmed the surface of that admittedly more important world—that so-called immaterial world! How closely, for example, you've studied physical contagions while altogether ignoring those other contagions. Now, if a man possessed power to destroy that courage, that morale you speak of, to turn a whole people into gibbering cowards, afraid of their own shadows——"

He caught himself quickly. The way his eyes flamed and his voice rang as he uttered this wild speculation quite completed my conviction that he was mad, and I was surprized at Hazard's unmistakably heightened interest.

"But I talk too much," finished Sadafuki. "You will do what I have commanded you to do."

"Explicitly," I said, "we are to interview a woman who has disobeyed you—the woman that was your wife—pretend friendship, seize and overpower her, and turn her over to you to be subjected to this—is it a contagion?"

"You are to turn her over to me," said Sadafuki harshly.

"But we should know how she has managed to defy you," I submitted.

"That is true," said Sadafuki. "She has fortified herself with food and poison and she remains in the center of a room. The poison she has sworn to take if any one approaches her. But with you she will hope for help because she is of your race. Besides, you will also be prisoners. But when you have seized her you will call out to the man who will remain outside and the door will be opened."

It was hard, of course, to admit even to Sadafuki a capacity for doing that, but disappointing him would be consolingly easy.

"We are very tired," I said, without exaggeration. "If you will give us a few hours' rest and food——"

"You will have till noon," said Sadafuki.

AGAIN he gestured and again two of his bodyguard, who were uniformed raggedly in blue cotton, ran forward with that over tensity and abnormal eagerness to obey that is one of the products of Sadafuki's sort of discipline. Presently Hazard and I were being led by one of them up a flight of stairs at the rear of the chamber. At the top of the stairs the guard opened a door, motioned us inside and closed the door behind us.

This room was absolutely bare, save for two pallets that lay on the floor at its farther end. Near the door was a window which, however, was closed by heavy iron bars. Just outside was a balcony, one of which, as we had already observed, encircled each floor of the *dagoba*. Beyond that balcony, we discovered, lay a complete view of the valley into which we had come by subterfuge and from which it appeared rather unlikely we should ever depart. A miracle of greenness seemed the bottom of that valley, dotted here and there by bent forms of laboring coolies, and very busy seemed the noisy plant at its upper end. We could even see, far up on the western

side, the beginning of the narrow trail along which we'd been conducted down to the *dagoba*.

At the upper end of the valley, too, was a cluster of mud huts surrounded by a high wall that had so far escaped our notice.

"Well," said Hazard, smiling grimly, "We've won our heart's desire. We're here."

It was, it will be remembered, the first opportunity we'd had for private talk since entering the place.

"Of course the man's crazy," said I.

"Of course," agreed Hazard.

"But what an establishment! Hundreds of Chinese, exclusive of the sentries, and they're all like scared puppets!"

"Even the sentries are prisoners," mused Hazard. "You can see it in their faces; they're afraid of their lives and worse. But who watches them? And how is the watch kept up at night?"

"Why not electric light?" I suggested. "Remember the glow we saw on the sky last night? High-powered searchlights, I suppose—power from the falls."

"Lord, you're right, Partridge! Here in central Asia! But what's to prevent? We Westerners are free enough with our knowledge."

"Well," said I, "we should learn that and other things from the woman. Though she must be off mentally, too, to believe in Sadafuki's madness."

"What do you mean?" asked Hazard queerly.

"That infernal—what did he call it?—immaterial invention of his."

"Did he say it was immaterial?"

"Well, no," I admitted.

"We've seen some strange things in this land, Partridge," replied Hazard slowly, "and we're liable to see many more. I rather believe we'll not find our strength in skepticism. What happened to the tribes who denied gunpowder? Now, for me, it's better to seize a weapon and use it. But let that go. I suppose there's only one way to handle our interview with the woman."

"To pretend to obey Sadafuki," I suggested, "to protest our friendship for her and to warn her in an undertone, if possible, to keep us at a distance. That is, to tell us just why we've been sent to her."

"And after that to do whatever the gods will let us do," agreed Hazard.

We were silent for a moment. In that silence I came to considering the valley as one might a nightmare—the product of a monstrous imagination. It seemed unreal, a place bewitched, and, indeed, fear's wizardry had created it. Fear's wizardry had brought all those men there, held them there in stronger than metal bonds, bowed their backs to Sadafuki's will. Why, all his rule was built upon it—and for a moment I thought I had the finger of my mind upon a stronger releasing-charm.

But I was recalled to the immediately practical by a vibrant whisper from Hazard—

"Partridge! Look there!"

I followed his pointing finger up the steep western ridge until I saw, perhaps two miles away eight little living specks coming toward the *dagoba*, along the same path Hazard and I had used an hour before. Evidently they also had come from the great outside, for that path led nowhere but to the tunnel's mouth; but that wasn't the disquieting thing. It was a fact that would have been hardly noticeable to eyes not trained for distance; but the two central specks thrust themselves up peculiarly among their companions, as much taller than they, as white men are than Chinese. This was our first hint of a thing that increased our peril tenfold. I looked at Hazard, and he smiled at me significantly.

"It couldn't be those two," I said.

"Well," debated Hazard, "it could, you know. Chinese aren't the best guards in the world, and men selected by the Ko Lao Hui are apt to be resourceful. But our next step remains the same in any case."

"Of course! They're gone!"

The whole party had descended into a sort of gully, which we knew would keep it hidden until it was very near the *dagoba*.

The next moment our door opened and a servant with a very erect body and very cringing eyes entered with a wooden platter containing steaming rice, plantains and "dough-strings."

While we ate, Hazard and I said nothing. For one thing, we hadn't heard the servant leave the door, and there was a faint possibility that he could understand English. For another, we were worn and tired, and there was little to say. The formulation of a definite plan is possible only when one can keep his hands to some extent on the guiding reins of circumstances. This, as

yet, we couldn't do; we could only move ahead.

And if that thing were true which we had both a moment before conjectured—if the two men whose rôles we had stolen had escaped and come for their revenge, then we must be guided entirely by events as they shaped themselves in the whirlwind of Sadafuki's rage—or so I felt. Hazard seemed very thoughtful.

However, I believe Hazard and I both felt sure of each other's wit to seize whatever events arose and make the best of them We'd gone through a great deal together, Hazard and I, from the Pai Ho to the Tsinglings. To me, at least, there was something in our companionship that robbed the unknown of most of its terror. I should want no better when I enter my last unknown trail, when I face my final and greatest adventure.

Well, we ate with good appetite, and when the guard who had brought us to the room came to conduct us to the task Sadafuki had laid out for us—work very appropriate to our rôles as servants of the Ko Lao Hui—we followed eagerly.

III

WE WERE glad Sadafuki was nowhere in evidence when we left the room. There was really, of course, no reason he should have been, if he was sure of us. Certainly neither he nor any of his slaves could go with us into the presence of the woman whose confidence we were supposed to obtain. We would be alone with her.

Our guide led us back along a narrow landing and then up a second flight of stairs set squarely above the first. Two more of these sets of stairs brought us, of course, to the upper or fifth floor of the place. The arrangement on each of the landings was the same—an outer door opening upon the balcony and an inner door similar to the one we had used on the second floor. Back of that was a corridor leading to several other doors, presumably entrances to as many rooms.

But on the fifth floor there was an interesting addition to this arrangement. The door to the balcony was open, and we could now guess the purpose of the narrow, lightly railed bridge which we had observed in approaching the *dagoba*. At the other end of the bridge, which rested upon a projection of rock, was a wooden door set in a frame which was mortised in the face of the cliff. Evidently beyond that was a chamber hollowed out of the mountainside to fill some particular need of Sadafuki's—no unusual thing, of course, in Shensi, half of whose country population are cliff-dwellers.

But our guide had turned to the door at the head of the stairway. To this door, which opened inward, was cleated a heavy wooden bar, secured at one end by a staple and padlock—the whole of which seemed to have recently been put into place. His yellow face immobile, his eyes expressionless, the Chinaman pulled from his tattered blouse a bundle of keys and fitted one of them to the lock.

The moment we saw those keys Hazard and I exchanged a swift glance. They were the same that we had seen half an hour before hanging on Sadafuki's girdle. Whether the discovery was important or not, whether we could turn it to our advantage, it was impossible to know; but at least it appeared that Sadafuki, secure in his power, had done an injudicious thing. It was but natural to believe that the key which opened the lock Sadafuki had placed over the refuge of his recalcitrant wife would be kept in company with other important keys.

The door opened, and we entered. Immediately the door was shut and locked behind us, and we were face to face with the woman whom we had been sent to betray.

I do not know which was the most surprized. Hazard and I hadn't known what to expect, but certainly we had not expected what we saw. I still think that not the least curious thing in the valley was that woman's presence there. And still, on the other hand, it was only a phase of our modern world which, whatever else one may think of it, is fuller of interest, oddity and mystery than any age that has preceded it. From racial separateness we have passed to the melting-pot. This fact really underlay our whole experience; it accounts no more fully for Sadafuki's education and for the white woman's union with him, than for the existence of the Hidden Valley itself.

At sight of us the woman, who had watched the door open in dead silence, gasped in amazement.

I think that at one time she had been strikingly beautiful. Even now, in her middle age and with ten years of life with Sadafuki behind her, she was alive, vital and not all all unattractive. Her Chinese clothing of brocaded silk but emphasized the defiant erectness of her figure. In her dark, flushed face, her dilated eyes, the backward fling of her well-shaped head, there was still a suggestion of the wildness of nature that no doubt explained, as well as such things can be explained, the attraction Sadafuki had for her in the beginning.

"Hush!" I said. "We are friends."

"What! Where did you——"

Her right hand had been half-way to her lips. As she slowly lowered it, I saw that it had contained a small bottle filled with some dark-colored liquid. On the floor at her feet was her little stock of husbanded food—brown corn-and-millet bread and uncooked rice. Evidently she was really prepared to die, either from poison or slow starvation, rather than yield herself as a subject for——

For what? I think that Hazard, whose imagination is inclined to outrun facts and in some cases to overleap them, already knew the magnitude of the threat conjured up from her by Sadafuki's monstrous dream.

"We're prisoners, too," said Hazard swiftly. "Don't be afraid; we're white men—how could we be anything but friends? But——"

In three sentences, using a tone that couldn't possibly carry through the door, Hazard told her of Sadafuki's plan to seize her.

As he did so, I thought I saw signs of an approaching collapse on her part, of overstrained nerves breaking at last. Her face grew pale and her bosom heaved; whether she was on the point of fainting or sobbing I couldn't tell, but either would have been very awkward, so I put a bit of sharpness into my voice.

"We've got to have your help, if we're to help you escape. Don't think you're out of it yet. We've no arms; we're as helpless as you, but there must be a chance with your knowledge of the place."

"There's always a chance," said Hazard, "but you've got to do some acting right now. Remember, you mustn't seem to trust us. Warn us in a loud voice to keep away."

This, of course, was for the benefit of the man in the hall and any other possible listener. Thereafter, the dialogue was conducted in a peculiar dual-toned fashion, but most of what we wanted to know the woman was able to tell us openly, in a seeming effort to win our sympathy, the while, pretending not to be sure of us, she kept us at a distance. The necessity of keeping her mind on the game seemed to restore her composure. She acted her part admirably, as most women are capable of doing under stress.

But that unfortunately left the conversation largely under her control. Hazard and I, mentally computing the time it would take for that ambiguously constituted party we'd seen approaching to arrive at the *dagoba*, were, of course, anxious to get at more essential facts; but one of the first things she insisted on explaining was her presence in this place. Under any other circumstances that would have been extremely interesting.

WHEN she had married Sadafuki some ten years before, she said, he had been very different than he was now—a statement not hard to credit. Indeed, he had been at that time an underpaid professor of physics in a certain Western university, rather distinguished than otherwise in that small college town by his mixture of bloods. But opportunity in the shape of a trust fund had come to him; he had stolen, been found out and had fled to China. There, four years ago, the Ko Lao Hui had recruited him, offering him, I suppose, one of the kingdoms of the world. His rise in their councils had been as rapid as his moral descent. Three years ago he had been given the mastery of this valley. The woman had come with him even here, as women will, and from that day till the present she'd never seen the face of one of her own race.

"But he was kind to me," she justified him, "till, till——"

"Until he went mad," I said roughly, sensing another threatened breakdown, "and you with him, seemingly, considering what you're most afraid of. That cursed discovery of his—sheer insanity, as one can tell by the way he talks about it."

"Mad!" she cried. "I would have been mad. It was that I was afraid of. I'd rather die. Did he tell you he got it—

how he drove the Chinese into paroxysm of terror and then segregated the—the contagion? Did he——"

"Nonsense!" I interrupted. "Control yourself and tell us something that'll help us to get out of this infernal place."

At that she did steady somewhat, and gave us a fairly good idea of an organization as perfect, I suppose, as was ever conceived. It was really the work of a genius in fear-compelled discipline—not Sadafuki but the man who had hired him, Koshinga, head of the Ko Lao Hui. And it seemed to confirm our impression that the valley was as proof against escape as a close-meshed net.

Mainly it was a system of guard and counterguard, of playing men against each other in incessant watchfulness. Thus was explained the two lines of sentries who surrounded the place. These were never permitted to intermingle. Guarding the workmen, they were no less guards upon each other; day and night they paced their posts in fear of each other, watching each each other for neglect of duty. The punishment for neglect of duty was death; the punishment for not reporting such neglect was also death, but preceded by torture. All chance of affiliation or conspiracy was destroyed by separate housing. Thus slaves guarded slaves; there could be imagined no more perfect autocracy.

And the object of it all, she told us, the purpose for which men were brought to this valley never to leave it again till they died, was the manufacture of wooden rifle stocks.

"In three years there hasn't been an escape," she said hopelessly. "At first there were many attempts."

"But there's always a vulnerable point," cried Hazard characteristically. "There's always a way out. Now this discovery of his——"

"Listen!" I interrupted.

For perhaps a minute I'd been hearing something that interested me. I had, however, been weak enough to do my hearing the injustice of discrediting it, for if it were true that there were English speaking voices coming faintly up through the silent floors of the *dagoba*, then they could hardly be other than the voices of the men we feared.

Hazard, with his mind on that chimerical discovery, glanced at me a little impatiently, but his own ears caught the sound. His voice and eyes turned cold as chilled steel.

"Do you think it's—" he began.

"I'm afraid so."

"Then we're— Well!"

His first words expressed the beginning of despair; his last word was a reaffirmation of supremacy over circumstances. There are men who, carrying their fight to the grave with them, will in this world at least never know defeat. I've never admired Hazard more than at the moment.

But the next moment I was forced to conclude that his courage was greater than his judgment, for he turned to the woman again and pursued his senseless inquiry.

"What is it? What does he think it is—that invention?"

"Why, it's—it's fear!" she faltered, staring at my disturbed face with evidently increased alarm.

"Fear!" repeated Hazard with a curious light on his face.

"Fear—a contagion! What do you——"

But then came a sound that shook even him to the soul, so that his question went uncompleted. It was a hoarse, inarticulate, animal-like cry, the cry of a man in rage, the voice of Sadafuki.

"My ——, Hazard!" I began protestingly. "Let's ——"

But Hazard turned swiftly to the woman again.

"*What* is it? Liquid, gas, or ——"

"It's—it's both."

"Where is it, then? Never mind that noise. Answer me!"

"It's—it's in the cave—at the end of the bridge."

There were feet pounding up the stairs. There was another voice than Sadafuki's—a voice that I well remembered.

"Those other papers prove it—that they're imposters. Show them to us; there are signs they don't know. We'll make them admit——"

I never knew the truth of those other papers; probably they were papers that Hazard and I had failed to take from them, bearing the names we'd stolen.

Then again came Sadafuki's roar. No doubt he was already convinced of our imposture.

"Hold them, Partridge—if you can—for a minute!"

That moment Hazard rasped those words

at me tensely, he had leaped upon the woman and dragged her toward the door. Startled as I was by this unexpected action, she was infinitely more startled, believing, I suppose, that our talk of friendliness had really been a ruse and that she was to be handed over to Sadafuki. She shrieked wildly. This shriek and the sound of the struggle supplemented—as Hazard had intended they should—the words in Shensian that he called through the door.

"Open quickly! We have her!"

The sentry had his orders and, machine that he was, he obeyed them in spite of the trouble below. The key went into the lock fumblingly, but he turned it at last, and pulled back the bar.

Instantly Hazard dragged the door open and leaped out upon him. I caught the woman as Hazard released her, put her back of me and started to follow. But Hazard had gripped the sentry about the waist, pinning his arms to his side, and so he held him for a moment, motionless. Then Hazard lifted him bodily, flung him headlong down the stairs and leaped through the outer door upon the balcony and from the balcony to the bridge. The angle of the bridge was such that in three steps he was out of my sight.

OF COURSE, in another man, Hazard's action would have suggested flight. In his case I had no thought of desertion; rather I was filled with a certain unreasonable hope, even when I looked down the stairway and saw Sadafuki, his evil face a picture of mad, befooled egoism, running up the bottom steps. I recalled that Hazard was never a man to act blindly, without a plan; habitually he thought ahead, even in the heat of conflict. It was only that thought that kept me from utter despair and from flinging myself down upon Sadafuki and dying with my hands gripping his throat.

Without realizing I had picked it up, I found myself flinging away from me an earthen pot of dwarfed shrubbery that had decorated the landing. It struck Sadafuki on the chest and staggered him, but he came on. Behind him were the two white men whose arrival had destroyed our pretenses, behind them Sadafuki's bodyguard, gibbering wildly, waving their revolvers, frenzied with their master's frenzy, fearfully furious to do his will. One of them discharged his pistol, and the bullet whistled past my shoulder.

I sprang back into the room I'd just left. With a cry that I suppose was half delirious, I perceived the heavy bar that had held the door. For a moment at least I could carry out Hazard's injunction to hold the rush. I tore the bar out and, clutching it near the end like a baseball player, swung it out across the head of the stairway.

"I'll kill the first man up," I shouted in English.

The rush checked itself, as a body loses momentum. It came on and stopped. At that moment Sadafuki proved himself the true tyrant; he stopped and bellowed an order to those below to advance and seize me.

There was, of course, no doubt as to their obedience. Then, they would have gone into flames at his command; they would have thrown themselves upon their own knives; they would have killed their own brothers. Such was his power at that moment. I suppose obedience, fear-compelled at first, had grown into an instinctive thing, habitual, a matter of reaction to his commands.

And that power doomed me, of course. I could kill one or two, but in the end they would get me. I would be overborne and done for without even a chance at Sadafuki whom I hated then with a berserker rage. It was very hard to keep from making a sally, but Hazard had ordered me to hold them.

Hazard! Where was Hazard?

One's thinking processes do not dally at moments like these. All of a sudden I laughed harshly. I remembered Hazard's credulous interest in Sadafuki's nightmare talk of empire. I remembered that in Hazard's hand, as he fled, was Sadafuki's keys, snatched from the grip of his servant. I remembered that at the other end of the bridge across which Hazard had run was the door to the underground chamber in which the woman had said was stored —what?

"Fear!" she had said.

Had Hazard's mind also succumbed to that monstrous folly?

"Altogether ignoring those other contagions — the contagion of fear — power to turn whole peoples into gibbering

cowards—" Fragments of Sadafuki's talk, and the woman's flitted through my brain.

I laughed again. At that moment Hazard leaped in from the balcony. In the crook of his arms, pressed against his chest, he carried a great glass receptacle, like one of those huge retorts in which acids are sometimes kept. It was so heavy that he staggered with it. But, half-turning, he lifted it above his head with an enormous effort and flung it down the stairway.

IV

WHAT followed was a natural thing. It had nothing do do with Sadafuki's wild imaginings—nothing. I admit with Sadafuki that the borderland of science is a shadowy one within which all inventions, from the flint ax to the flying machine, have lain. But it isn't good to believe that borderland reaches farther than the limits of the physical world. In that last day when the stars shall fall crashing from the skies, there is that in man which will still hold him erect and unshaken among the ruins.

And until that day there will be no power on earth created of force that shall not fall with its creator.

The instant Hazard threw that peculiar weapon I was by his side, looking down the stairway. And so I saw my last of Sadafuki's face.

From ferocious rage it had turned, at sight of that catapulted retort, into a living mask of terror. Then—it was not. It had disappeared. The missile struck him with the force of a cannon-ball and death took swift vengeance. He fell backward and two others fell with him—the two Chinamen who were moving forward at his command. They wriggled out from under the thing that had struck them; but he lay quivering, his arms outstretched, the shattered glass container lying with one jagged edge across his throat and pouring its reddish contents over him.

From that a fluid emerged with a boiling sound, a white vapor that was yet not like steam, for it was heavier than air, and spilled down the stairway.

I do not think that vapor reached the faces of the leading Chinese before they fled. I think they turned immediately at sight of their master's death. It is true their shrieks were terror-filled, but it is also true that they were shot through with a great joy. And if they were wholly possessed by fear, why did the two white men, sole representatives after Sadafuki's passing of the power of the Ko Lao Hui, fall before they reached the landing, punctured by a dozen bullets?

"He is dead. The Great One is dead."

So the Chinese yelled as they ran; and through the sudden vagueness and turbulence that comes over my memory at this point, I recall yells from below answering them. I recall a great scampering and crashing of doors. I recall rushing with Hazard back to the store-room and fetching therefrom retort after retort of that liquid that seemed to me then so potent, and hurling them away from me. After the second trip there seemed from the silence no more Chinese left in the *dagoba*, so the rest of the containers we flung from the bridge. They smashed on the ground and added their gaseous product to the vapor that was already pouring out of every aperture in the first floor of the *dagoba*.

It diffused through the air and, still hanging close to the ground, was borne by the wind up the valley.

Ahead of it, or enveloped in the front of the thin, white mist, ran the Chinese who had escaped from the *dagoba*, flinging their arms high, shrieking out:

"The Master is dead. The Great One is dead. The ocean-ghost children have killed the Master."

HAZARD and I came back to the *dagoba*, got the now sobbing woman and, standing with her between us on the balcony, watched that madness and frenzy of flight, contagious even as Sadafuki had said, keep pace with the vapor, keep pace with the running and the shouting, as far as we could see up the valley. The men working in the fields flung down their tools, and the armed guards first stared stupidly at the confusion and then added their cries to the tumult and mingled with the mob.

They were like driftwood before a flood, a pale flood of immaterial mist. I do not know how long we watched them, nor what was said. Hazard has claimed that the last container of it was broken and that we had escaped even a whiff of it. It

may be true. One says many things under excitement.

I know that at last the hum and rasping roar that came from the gunstock factory at the head of the valley died down. Then a thin, light smoke, reddened with licking tongues of flame, began to rise above its roof, and up the black and precipitous rocks, looking at that distance like scurrying ants, hundreds of figures swarmed.

And then we ran also.

There was a reason for this. If intuition hadn't warned us, logic should have told us of our danger. For there was the burning plant at the base of the falls—a plant near which we should have conjectured the probable presence of explosives—there were the madly fleeing Chinese filled no doubt with hatred of their prison-house, and wild for its destruction; there was the dam over which the water tumbled and the great reservoir beyond.

We ran across the bridge and clambered up the rocks, dragging the woman after us. I do not know whether there was hysteria in our flight. We had climbed perhaps a hundred yards, straight up the face of the cliff, when the valley was filled with a great booming, as if a hundred cannons had exploded.

We looked toward the burning factory, and it wasn't there. Nothing was there. There was a great, jagged hole in the cliff behind it, a rift that extended far up, and then that was gone. It was obliterated by the falling water.

The dam had gone; the thousands of tons of water behind it was free. The sudden bursting forth of that pent-up energy was tremendous, indescribable. There seemed something angry and vindictive in that flood. It came on in a solid wall, twenty feet high, of boiling, bubbling wrath. On its surface were tossed like playthings the great timbers of the factory whose wheels it had turned so long. It swept away the village that had been the home of slaves with one sweeping gesture. It rushed down the valley, filling it from side to side, wiping away everything.

It reached the *dagoba*, swept it from its foundation, lifted it and flung it against the cliff with insensate rage. Thereafter for awhile its turmoil increased as its pressure heaped up from behind and fought for the narrow outlet. Presently it subsided, but its old channel was gone, and the Hidden Valley, leveled like a floor, had become—and still remains, I believe—merely the widened bed of a swiftly rushing river.

HOW Hazard and I, hours afterward, descended from where we had watched this thing and found among the ruins of the shattered *dagoba* food to last us on our long journey through the mountains and enough silver sycees to give the woman a start toward a new life, and how we finally reached Sian-Fu, where we turned her who had been Sadafuki's wife over to the hospitable missionaries who would keep her until an opportunity came to travel to the Coast and thence to the States, would make a pointless narrative. The story has been told of the destruction of Sadafuki's kingdom.

Of the discovery he claimed to have made—that monstrous phantom of his brain—we learned nothing more. When the woman was fit for it, Hazard questioned her, but she would add nothing to what she had already told us.

"For the welfare of mankind"—so she justified her silence, and we didn't press her.

Out of that and what she had said previously and Sadafuki's few words in our first and only interview, Hazard has built a theory that, if true, would make this the most important exploit in our whole campaign against the Ko Lao Hui, not even excepting our final adventure against Koshinga himself. And of course he finds justification for his belief in the happenings of that last hour.

But I hold that Sadafuki's power had within itself a flaw that in any case would soon have brought it toppling down. And it is certain that the vapor traveled no faster up the valley than the news of Sadafuki's death. It was not fear that animated and enfrenzied the fleeing coolies, but the breaking of the chains of fear.

Ike Harper's Historical Holiday

by W. C. Tuttle

Author of "Inside Information," "Playing Safe in Piperock," etc.

"I AIN'T figured none on making it a personal holiday," says old Judge Steele, shifting his position on the sidewalk. "I've been thinking about taking myself plumb out of range of earthly things on said date. A man of my age has got to look out for his health."

"The Lord giveth and, also and moreover, He taketh away in His own time," states "Old Testament" Tilton pious-like.

"Gospel fact, Testament," nods the judge. "But there ain't no use of a fellow trying to force the issue. I know Piperock."

"Needs tempering," orates Mike Pelly. "Piperock is all right for a little town and she plumb exhibits energy beyond her capacity, and that is one of the reasons I'm trying to get you pelicans to see things my way. Paradise will act as an anchor. *Sabe?* You Piperockers would be lost in a place like Paradise."

"Too true," nods Magpie Simpkins, sheriff of Yaller Rock County, caressing his long mustache. "Great place to lose things, Mike. I had two horse-thieves stolen from me in that city."

"Curlew is a comer," proclaims "Hassayampa" Harris, who owns what there is of the town. "Why not come to Curlew? She stands to welcome you with open arms."

"Any time she does I'll hide my money in my boot," squeaks "Scenery" Sims.

"Open ——! The only thing what is open in Curlew is the jail."

"I fear me that this meeting will soon need legal or medical assistance," announces Judge Steele, blowing his long nose apologetic-like. "There ain't no use skating so near to air-holes, folks. There ain't a danged one of you what ain't moved your guns around to the front. What for kind of a way is this to arbitrate?"

"You unbuttoned your vest, judge," reminds Magpie. "Don't you wear a shoulder holster?"

"Patriotism, Magpie. It ain't because I'm belligerent. Any old time these snake-hunters from foreign parts belittles our shining city I can only remain cool and collected up to a certain point. I hadn't ought to wear a vest."

Me and "Dirty Shirt" Jones listens to this elevating conversation in disgust. Me and Dirty are not with the meeting nor a part of it, except being as it's pulled off out in the open we can't help hearing it. Magpie represents Piperock, Mike orates Paradise's opinions and Hassayampa is there to lay Curlew at our feet.

Old Judge Steele has to horn in to add dignity to the affair and little Scenery Sims adds his squeaky voice, which detracts from any dignity the judge might add.

"Now about the religious attractions—" begins Old Testament, but Magpie gives him a look and he sets down.

"This is a Fourth of July meeting, Testament," states Magpie. "We may need you later on to proclaim ashes to ashes, but right now you better pass the hand. *Sabe?* You're all the sky-pilot we've got around here, and for the good of our soul I asks you to keep out. You're all right for what you're intended."

"Come on, Ike," says Dirty. "These *hombres* will frame up something awful, you can gamble on that, and the less we has to do with it the more chance we has to get shot by accident and mourned by few."

Then we went over to Buck's place and leaned against the mahogany.

"Committee come to a understanding?" asks Buck.

"As usual," replies Dirty. "They'll mistreat each other for a while, stop by mutual consent and celebrate as they see fit. There ain't no sense in having a community celebration, Buck. Ain't it bad enough for each community to kill off of their own without joining up to make it a wholesale slaughter?"

"If Lincoln knowed what he started when he made the Fourth a holiday he'd wish he'd kept right on splitting corral poles, believe me," grinned Buck.

"Robert E. Lee," corrects old Sam Holt, looking up from his solitaire layout. "Lincoln didn't have no hand in it, Buck."

"Yeah?" grunts Pete Gonyer. "Is that so? Let me tell you both something: If General Grant hadn't hankered to march to the sea, where would your old Fourth of July be, I'd rise to inquire?"

"I said Lincoln," reproves Buck, dropping his hands below the level of the bar. "I can prove it."

Pete hitches forward in his chair and rubs the palms of his hands on his hips.

"I said Grant—U. S. Grant! *Sabe?*"

Old Sam Holt yawns and slips his hand unconcerned-like under the shoulder of his coat. Then he spits out into the middle of the room.

"Robert E. Lee!" he snaps mean-like.

"Hurrah for history!" yelps Dirty and we both went out and sat on the hitch-rack.

"Dirty," says I, "which one was right?"

"Ike, I'm —— if I know. As soon as the convention is over I'll ask the judge. He ought to know."

Maybe he did. He comes walking along stiff-legged like a bear and Dirty accosts him thusly—

"Judge, who is responsible for the Fourth of July?"

The old pelican stops, peers at Dirty over his glasses and clears his throat.

"I'm surprized to find anybody so danged ignorant," says he, pained-like.

"Yeah? I didn't ask you to display oratory over my ignorance, judge. You might at least express an opinion. We won't dispute you."

"The Fourth of July was started—was started back in—let's see."

The judge scratches his chin and peers at the ground.

"Back in 1492—seems like that's the date. Anyway, it was along about that time——"

"I asked you who, judge, not when," reminds Dirty and just then Magpie strolls up.

"What's the argument?" he asks.

"Who started the Fourth of July, Magpie?"

"Which one, Dirty? This one, the last one or the one before? Be definite."

"There you are," grins the judge, "Magpie's a scholar. Your question was too general, Mister Jones."

Him and Magpie locks arms and goes into Buck's place, while me and Dirty sets there on the rack and registers disgust. Know what Dirty looks like when he shows disgust?

DIRTY is so cock-eyed in one eye that he has to shut it in order to see straight. His eyebrows grows so high up on his forehead that he looks plumb astonished at everything, and he walks like somebody was prodding him in the back of the knees. When Dirty registers disgust on his face, he'd make a bee-stung grizzly stop scratching to laugh.

Pretty soon there comes a yelp from the saloon, a shot is fired, and Pete Gonyer comes out like a comet. He's looking back as he exits and he slams right into one of the porch posts, takes it along with him and acts mean-like over it, like it was alive. Then he sets up and looks around.

"Who started the Fourth of July, Pete?" asks Dirty.

"U. S.——" begins Pete and then glances up at the bunch crowding the door.

Buck has got a shotgun in his hands. Pete scratches his chin and says—

"Lincoln!"

"What Lincoln?" asks Buck sweet-like.

"Nebrasky," grunts Pete and Buck nods like he's satisfied.

Just then Chuck Warner, a freak from the Cross J, rides in. He's got a long, tired looking face and short legs. He comes over and leans against the rack.

"Chuck," says Dirty, "who started the Fourth of July?"

"Well, you might say it was George Washington and again you might say it was the Delaware River," replies Chuck,

wise-like. "You see, Washington wanted to get across the river, which was full of ice, so they put him in a boat and rowed him across. *Sabe?* In honor of said voyage, which was on said day and date, they sets same aside as a holiday."

"Ice!" squeaks Scenery. "On the Fourth of July, Chuck?"

"Beyond the shadder of a doubt," replies old Judge Steele. "I've got a picture of it in my office."

"The Delaware River don't freeze in Summer," objects Buck. "She's sort of a south river, if I reminds myself correct."

"In spots," grins Chuck, wiggling his ears. "Washington crossed her north end, Buck. She's a long river."

"Sure," agrees Pete. "River was too long to go around. I knowed that Lincoln didn't have no more to do with it than—than Grant did."

"Speaking of Fourth of July," states Sam Holt, "I'd admire to say a few words about Robert E. Lee."

"I'm going home," says Dirty Shirt. "I don't care a whoop who did start it. All I know is this: It might 'a' been a wise man who started it, but a lot of danged fools have monkeyed with it until she ain't no good for man nor beast.

"I may attend in a body, but I hereby states that I won't be part nor parcel of celebration and I won't act as pall-bearer on July fifth, nor the day after nor the next day. I won't do anything that might carve 'Died July Fourth' on my tombstone. *Adios.*"

Dirty Shirt rode out of town and I went up to our cabin. I say "our cabin" meaning the place where me and Magpie hangs out. We're pardners in everything, except when I declare myself out, when Magpie declares me in and I ain't long winded enough to argue it.

Magpie is sheriff of Yaller Rock County, which is something to be proud of—like being a target—and any time he feels that I ain't going fifty-fifty with his troubles he swears me in as a deputy. He comes home later on and sets down to our table, where he does a little work with a pencil.

After while he yawns and rolls a smoke.

"Ike, it is better so," says he.

"It always is, Magpie," I admits.

"Curlew won't go to Paradise," he states. "Paradise won't go to Curlew. Curlew won't come to Piperock and Piperock won't go to Curlew. Paradise won't come to Piperock and Piperock won't go to Paradise. See how it is?"

"Uh-huh," I admits "There ain't nobody going no place. Good!"

"Wrong, Ike."

Magpie hists his boots upon the table and twists his mustache.

"We're going to have a community celebration. This is going to be a hum-dinger and entirely out of the ordinary. Paradise, Piperock and Curlew are going to have a three-corner celebration and we've picked Dancing Prairie as the celebration center. How does she strike you, Ike?"

"Ker-bump!" says I. "That sure is a fitting place, Magpie. Following an Injun precedent, we can dance the scalps. There's an old Injun graveyard on the river bank which could be put in shape and would save the trouble of hauling the casualties home. Yes'm, you picked a grand spot."

"Aw, this ain't going to be no hip-hooray celebration, Ike. We're getting civilized on celebrations, Ike. There ain't no hot heads on the committee, so she'll all come off cool and collected-like."

"Said committee is?"

"'Chuck' Warner, 'Hassayampa' Harris, 'Doughgod' Smith and Mike Pelly."

"Yeah?" says I. "Some class! A liar, a thief, a fool and a bartender. What are you going to be, Magpie?"

"Me? I'm going to be the boss of the whole works. I'm the *hombre* what sees that every thing is pulled off as per program. I may need an aid."

"Then you'll pick him from the rabble," I states. "I will be far away and going farther on that day, Magpie. Three days from now I'm going to have a hundred miles between me and Dancing Prairie and the distance will grow farther as the day goes on."

"Hold up your right hand, Ike," he snaps. "Swear to do your duty as deputy sheriff, so help you Gawd? Huh! Now, dang your bow-legged soul, you stay hitched to the law for four days! You run out on me and I'll get you thirty days for contempt of court."

"Who do I have to have contempt for, Magpie?" I asks.

"Well, Judge Steele and—uh—me, I reckon."

"Put me in," says I. "Thirty days for one

contempt, Magpie? Better hurry up,'cause my contempts are growing so fast that one lifetime won't begin to cover the case."

Magpie ain't a man of his word, so I has to suffer freedom. I permits myself to be sworn in as a deputy to a sheriff but nothing nor nobody can swear me in as a deputy to a Yaller Rock celebration. I sets down in the office and lets nature take its course.

I SEES Hassayampa and Magpie waving their arms in arguments, which don't never seem to be settled. Then I sees Mike and Magpie imitating windmills, as they thresh out the details. Delegates from Paradise and Curlew seem to mingle free like with the gentle folk of Piperock, but as yet there ain't no great lot of gun-play. I feel that there is plenty to come, so I don't deplore to inaction.

Lumber and all such needful things are hauled from Piperock, but I sets there in the office, with my feet on the table and sorrow in my heart, 'cause I know—man, I know there's going to be sorrow somewhere.

Cometh to me "Sad" Samuels of Curlew, sets him down at my table and looks sorrowful-like.

"Ike," says he, "can you give me a description of Custer?"

"Horse-thief?" I asks.

"Fit Injuns," says Sad. "Remember him, don't you?"

"Not from your description, Sad. Think you seen him?"

Sad rolls a cigaret and looks sad-like at me. He'd look sad if somebody left him a million. I seen him cry over a straight flush one night. He wets that cigaret and then drops it on the floor. Too sad to smoke.

"Ike, do I look like Custer?"

"Want me to say yes, Sad?"

"I've got to be Custer."

"Yes," says I. "It's all right with me, for Sad. If you must you must, but why has you got to be unnatural thataway?"

"Ike," Sad chaws his chin-strap and becomes melancholy, "Ike, who started the Fourth of July?"

I dropped my feet off the table and yanked out my gun. Sad lit on his feet and backed toward the door with his hands up.

"Sad Samuels, did you come here to start something?" I asks.

"Honest to Gawd, Ike, I never did! Hassayampa orates that General Custer did, *sabe?*"

"In such a case I'm ashamed of Hassayampa," says I. "Just because the Injuns didn't like Custer it ain't giving you and Hassayampa no right to try and turn the whites against him too."

"Don't blame me, Ike," wails Sad. "We can't all be educated. According to the opinions I've heard lately there's a lot of difference in histories. Ain't you got no opinions on the matter?"

"There's just one thing I do know, Sad," says I, "and that is this: The next *hombre* what asks me that question is going to get knocked so far into the Dark Ages that he'll be able to get his imformation first hand."

Sad nodded his head and went out. Sad makes me weary with that we're all-got-to-go-sometime expression on his face.

Then cometh Mike Pelly. We exchanges the peace sign.

"Tomorrow is the Fourth," states Mike. "Tomorrow morning."

"According to Hood's Sa'sparilly," says I.

"Yeah," admits Mike, drumming on the table with his fingers. "Seems queer how much ignorance a feller can uncover in this here cow-country, Ike. Any man with brains knows who started the Fourth."

"With brains," I admits.

"You know, don't you, Ike?"

"I do, Mike, but I promised not to tell."

"I ain't asking, Ike. Any man has a right to his opinions. Magpie's bull-headed and so is Hassayampa. I ain't saying that they ain't got a right to their opinions, Ike. So long as Magpie orates that Piperock is going to do the originator proud, and Curlew aims to do the same, ain't it O. K. and proper that Paradise should hold up their ideals and aims?"

"What do you wish me to do, Mike?"

"Me and Judge Steele ain't friends by about six years, Ike. There ain't another one in the county and I'm asking you as a friend if you will try and borrow the judge's stovepipe hat for me? See your way clear?"

I looks at Mike's head, which takes a number eight, and then I thinks of about six and seven-eighths for the judge. Every body is entitled to their own fancies, so

Mike sits there while I gets the hat for him.

"Ask you if you was going to wear it, Ike?" he asks, tickled over it.

"Nope! Never asked a question," I replies, which was true, 'cause the judge wasn't in his office.

Magpie comes home happy that night. He poured beans in his coffee and put sugar in his soup. I don't mind, because I'm feeling loco myself.

"Ike," says he, puffing on his spoon, "what did Washington do after he crossed the Delaware?"

"Search me! What did he cross it for, Magpie?"

"That's the —— of it. Reckon I better go up to the judge's office and take another look at the picture. He must 'a' had a reason."

"Yes," says I. "Maybe there was some danged fools from Piperock on his side of the river and he wanted to get away while the getting was good."

Magpie comes back after I'm in bed. I reckon he thought I was asleep. He gets out in the middle of the floor, puts one foot on a soap-box, shoves his hand inside his vest like something itched him and throws back his head. He keeps rearing back and feeling inside his vest until I gets nervous.

"Mister Simpkins," says I, "if you'd hang your shirt on an ant-hill they'd all leave. What's the idea of the foot-rest?"

He glares at me and I ducks under the the blankets. After while I peers out again and right then I elects him to the highest office in the loco lodge. He's got my old blue overcoat on with both sides pinned back from the bottom, like two big lapels, and he's got my old fedora hat on cross-ways. I peeks out after a while and sees him shining his boots with stove-polish. I hears him grunt—

"I'll make 'em up and take notice."

"All but you," says I. "You won't notice much, old trailer, 'cause you'll be dead. Somebody will kill you too dead to skin and I'll have to sew up the holes in that coat before cold weather sets in."

Then I went to sleep with a six-gun in my hand.

Dirty Shirt shows up at our cabin the next morning just after Magpie left and sets down on the bunk.

"Happy Fourth of July, Ike," says he by way of greeting. "We're going down to the celebration?"

"Maybe you, Dirty—not us."

"Aw, be patriotic, Ike."

"I love my country, Dirty, but she ain't going to mean nothing to me after I'm a memory."

"The glorious Fourth was invented for patriotic folks, Ike," says he. "Foreigners and shepherds are the only ones exempt. I feel it my duty to hold argument with you."

"I defy anybody to make me go!" I yelps. "I mean it, too."

Well, when we came in sight of the scene of conflict Dirty gave me back my gun and asked my pardon. I told him to save his breath for running and then we went down to Buck's tent, where we bought a demijohn and spent the morning welcoming folks to our celebration.

We welcomed a lot of folks that morning. When we ran out of folks we'd welcome each other.

LATER on we had trouble making the turns around the tents, being as we tangles plentiful in the guy-ropes. We emerges out of one tangle and are just about to celebrate our narrow escape, when I sort of reaches ou and picks a man out of the air. That man sure is moving plenty and him and me went into the dirt. I set up and put on my hat, and along came a hunk of lead and took it right off my head.

Then I ducks and somebody steps on my head, the same of which drives my nose deep into Dancing Prairie. When I gets unearthed I finds Old Testament Tilton setting there with a pair of black eyes and a foolish expression on his face. Dirty is walking circles on his hands and knees, like a pup preparing for bed.

Old Testament feels of his eyes, squints at me and says:

"I said to him—'Judge, we'll open with a prayer,' and he said— 'We will not. We'll open with a speech from me. I've got a whangdoodler of a speech all framed up.' I says to him— 'Judge, I takes exceptions——'"

Old Testament hauled out a paper and held it in front of me.

"Got a prayer all wrote out, Ike."

I picked up my hat and looked her over. I shoved my finger through the bullet-hole

in the crown and looks at Old Testament.

"Wonder where the other two went?" says he. "He shot three times."

"Who?" asked Dirty.

"Ain't I just got through telling you that I wanted to open with a prayer and the judge wanted to open with a speech?" says he indignant-like.

"Neither one of you held openers, Testament," says I. "Next time anybody starts shooting at you, old-timer, you run away. *Sabe?* The judge ought to be ashamed for shooting at a preacher, Dirty."

"Yeah," agrees Dirty. "Very poor shooting. Missed three times. Awful!"

We left the old pelican setting there on the ground and pretty soon we bumps into Hassayampa. Hassayampa has got a gun in his hand and a tearful countenance. When he sees us he wipes the tears away with the muzzle of his gun and weaves up to us.

"Goin' to killum," says he, quavering-like. "Sure's ——!"

"Who's going to bite the dust?" asks Dirty.

"Knocked 'im down faster'n he can get up, and then shoot three times at 'im," states Hassayampa, wise as a owl. "Ol' Testyment's frien' of mine. No brains but sholid meat. Soon live as die. Tha's me."

Hassayampa rocks on his heels.

"Goin' to make speech, eh? Prayer's best. Got a idea, folks. Le's let Old Testyment make prayer for the judge. Thassa good idea. Kill two birds with one rock."

Hassayampa smiles through his tears and goes hunting for the judge.

"Well," says Dirty, "let's check off anybody but the judge, 'cause right now Hassayampa couldn't hit the supreme bench of Montana with a shotgun full of bird-shot."

Just then Magpie comes parading along and I accosts him.

"Just about to open up the show, gents," says he. "Go on up to the speaker's stand and get a good place. Things are working out better than I thought they would. Never seen the like."

"Same here," says I. "Casualties are too few—so far."

We finds the crowd milling around the front of a big tent. There ain't no sign of the speaker's stand, so we asks Doughgod Smith about it.

"This is it here," states Doughgod, pointing at the big tent. "The platform is built inside the tent or the tent is built over the top of the platform. Danged if I know which is correct!"

"Private speaking, eh?" grunts Dirty. "Good idea!"

Just then Magpie mounts a box in front of the tent and raises his hand in the peace sign.

"Friends and folks from Paradise and Curlew," says he, "we meet today to celebrate in a civilized way the——"

"I takes that first statement to heart, Magpie," interrupts Hassayampa. "I don't mind being unlisted as a friend but I do object to being put behind Paradise."

"Paradise is my happy home right now," squeaks Scenery Sims. "You snake-hunters from the great unwashed had better not let your hearts enter too much in the festivities. *Sabe?*"

"You trouble-hunters go crawl in a hole!" yells Magpie.

"Free country, ain't she?" asks "Telescope" Tolliver of the Cross J. "Ain't a man got a right to talk?"

"If that's the way you feels about it, cut your wolf loose!" yelps Magpie. "I got up here to open this show, which is supposed to be a heap carefree and joyous, but any time you fellers opine to take it serious I reckon there's enough mourners to go around."

"Aw, let Magpie open her up," urges somebody back in the crowd. "If we don't like it, there's plenty of daylight left to enable us to shoot straight."

The crowd seems to see the wisdom of the remark, so Magpie says—

"Friends and folks from Curlew and Paradise ——"

I heard that gun click and so did Magpie, 'cause he covers the crowd and looks us over serious-like.

"Scenery Sims," says he, "you put that gun back in your holster or I'll heat the muzzle and brand you with the double-doughnut! *Sabe?* I put Paradise in front of Curlew the first time."

Magpie lowers his gun and faces the crowd.

"I don't want no blame for what you're going to see, folks. There's a difference of opinion as to who is to blame for this glorious date, so in order to keep everlasting peace in the county we lets each and

every participating city show their patriotism in their own way and according to their own beliefs. The sign will tell the tale. Let 'er go!"

The flaps of the tent swing open. I don't know how she looks to anybody else but this is as she was viewed by Ike Harper.

There stands Mike Pelly in the middle of the platform. He's got on Old Testament's long black coat which fits him at no place except around the bottom, being as Old Testament is built like a lodge-pole and Mike is fashioned after the specifications of a hogshead. On his head balances Judge Steele's stovepipe hat; in his hands is an ax, while he stands all spraddled out over a couple of poles.

The sign reads:

ABRAHAM LINCOLN ACCORDING TO PARADISE
HE DONE IT

Bung!

A six-gun busts right by my ear, and I sees that tall hat hop off Mike's head and sail back into the tent.

"Punch a preacher, will you?" whoops Hassayampa. He's got a reserved space in the back of the crowd, and there he stands, rocking back and forth on his heels.

"Hey!" Old Judge Steele worms his way to the front of the platform and scowls up at Paradise's donation. "Where'd my hat come from?"

Mike scratches his head with the handle of the ax and stares down at the judge.

"Come from?" he asks. "You mean went to, don't you?"

Bung! goes Hassayampa's gun again.

"I wishes to call your attention," explains Hassayampa belligerent-like. "Do I have to kill somebody to get noticed?"

Hassayampa's bullet must have cut the rope, 'cause the flaps dropped down and saved Mike.

"That wasn't the judge," states Dirty to Hassayampa.

"Nobody else wears election hats," mumbles Hassayampa. "I know that hat."

Then Magpie's head protrudes from between the flaps, and he yelps at me:

"Ike, you take that codfish from Curlew and stake him to a tree. He's a trouble-breeder!"

"Will he?" yells Hassayampa. "Nobody but me to protect the ministry from a bunch of heathen hop-heads, is there? Who's going to take me?"

Hassayampa's voice wails with rage, and you can't blame me for not taking him, can you? I swore to do my duty, but a man has got a right to define duty as he sees fit. I figured I'd be worth a lot more to posterity if I ignored Hassayampa.

I DIDN'T care for the statue of Lincoln. Mike looked about as much like Lincoln as a fish-pole looks like a bucket of water, and deep down in my heart I wished that Hassayampa hadn't held so high. Of course Hassayampa has to get cocky about it. He yells—

"You bow-legged, star-wearing, grinny faced son-of-a-duck, come and get me!"

"I don't want you," says I. "I ain't collecting antique eggs today. I'm going to get me a drink."

"I was just funning, Ike," says he. "I'll go peaceful, 'cause I'm dry, too."

Then me and Hassayampa runs into an argument. We finds Ricky Henderson, "Three Star" Thorndyke, Art Miller and "Coyote" Calkins arguing with Doughgod Smith. Doughgod holds forth thusly:

"You've got to show a little becoming class, ain't you? I'm bossing the music end of the program, and she can't fall below the rest, can she?"

"She can't," agrees Ricky. "She sure can't, Doughgod." And the four of them walks away.

Doughgod looks at us and sort of grins.

"Them is the Paradise brass band," explains Doughgod. "Been tooting for two weeks for this celebration. Everything is sort of out of the ordinary, so I wishes my end to show up well. A band is just a band unless they rides horses, which makes 'em a mounted band. *Sabe?* Them *hombres* is going to dispense music from their broncs."

We looks back at the speaker's tent, and here comes an apparition which we deciphers to be Mike Pelly. Mike sure looks like the breaking up of a hard Winter. He's got the brim of that stovepipe hat around his neck and in his hand he carries one of them rails he was posing over. He's still got on portions of that tight coat. He's got a bump on his forehead, and in his face is memories of long ago. He weaves up in sort of waltz time and pauses to look back.

"Who done it, Mike?" I asks.

"Lincoln," says he sweet-like and weaves on.

"Lincoln was a great man," states Doughgod.

"Was?" grunts Hassayampa. "If he hung that bump on Mike I'd say he is, not was, Doughgod. Almost as great as Custer. My gosh, I done forgot all about my contentions, Ike. Let's go back and see Custer."

"All right," says I. "Why stop at modern history, Hassayampa? Let's go further back and see Caesar or the last of the Mohicans."

We found a fairly peaceful bunch in front of the tent. Old Judge Steele wanders up to us. His face sure looks like something had tried to erase his nose, and in his hand is the remnants of that high hat. Just then I'm grabbed by the arm, and Magpie's voice grunts in my ear—

"Feller wants to see you, Ike."

I suffers him to lead me around back of the tent, where he lifts the canvas enough to let us both under. I was glad to get away from the judge right then, 'cause I don't know what Mike might have told him.

In there I meets the worst freak I've seen this day and date. It happens to be Sad Samuels, but he sure is disguised. I reckon he's dug up all the fringed buckskin in Yaller Rock County and hung it on his lanky carcass. He stands there, leaning against the platform, puffing away on an extinct cigaret.

"Ike, meet General Custer," says Magpie.

"Howdy, Cus," says I. "How's all your little Big Horns?"

"Poorly, Ike. You ain't sore at Curlew, are you?"

"Not at the town itself, Sad. The town ain't to blame."

"Let me explain it," says Magpie. "Curlew has ideas of her own as to who is to blame for the Fourth, Ike. Being a free country and peace on earth to all men we lets each city worship as they see fit. *Sabe?* Curlew opines that General Custer is the one."

"All right with me," says I. "Make it anybody you want, just so you keeps the name of Harper out of the list. I won't have my good name sullied, Magpie."

"We'll respect your wishes, Ike," says Magpie. "Now here's what Sad wants of you; he's shy one actor for his living picture, and you're the only person he can depend upon. He honors you, Ike."

"Yeah?" says I. "Honor of that kind is like beauty—it don't get under my skin. I won't have a danged thing to do with it. Not a danged solitary thing! Rest in peace is my motto, and I don't care where the chips fall. I will not do it!"

Well, they got me into that disguise, and I'm betting that nobody ever looked like me.

"Not so danged bad at that," states a voice, and I turns around.

It looks like a cross between an Injun painted for the war-trail and an accident in a paint factory. It's wearing the headdress of the Sioux, the breast-plate of a Cheyenne and the pants of a Digger medicine-man, which consists of a pad at the knees and feathers at the ankle—nothing more. He's got a wooden knife about three feet long. His face is painted like the rainbow, one end of his mustache being pink and the other green.

"My ——!" says I. "That last drink broke the camel's back!"

It is "Mighty" Jones.

"Shake hands with your paw," says he. "I'm Rain-in-the-Face."

I looked at Magpie and the tears are flowing down his cheeks. Any man must be tender hearted to cry at a time like this.

"Who in the —— am I?" I asks.

"My daughter," says Rain-in-the-Face. "You're Pokyhontas."

All the history I ever knew stood on it's head and skidded out of the picture. I looks at General Custer and then at my paw.

"With a mustache?" I asks foolish-like.

"Your face don't show, "says Magpie choking-like. "You assumes a bowed attitude over Custer, who is about to get carved by Rain-in-the-Face. Curlew may be wrong in the main facts, but that part is historical."

"It will be," I agrees. "I feel that this celebration will be wrote up for posterity —if anybody is left to write it."

Just then somebody shows their impatience by shooting twice through the ridge-pole, so we wobbles up and takes our position.

Sad is on his hands and knees with his chin on a block of wood, and they places me on my knees, with my nose muffled in

the back of his neck, and my hands are raised as in prayer. Over us stands Rain-in-the-Face, with his soft-pine sword raised aloft. I've got my head toward the audience and I gets a glimpse of the sign as the curtain goes up. It reads:

CUSTER DONE IT AFTER
POKYHONTAS SAVED HIM
FROM HER PAW. FROM CURLEW

I hears a slight stir in the audience.

Bang! goes a gun. I glances behind me. Mighty is standing there looking at his sword, which ain't nothing but a splinter now.

"Don't never try to split up no ladies around here, dog-gone your painted picture!" whoops Dirty Shirt's voice. "Don't you never do it!"

Dirty is right up against the platform and appears to be trying to get up with the living pictures.

"*Yo-o-o-o-ow!*" yelps a voice from the rear of the crowd. "Bust up my donation, will you!"

HASSAYAMPA has got a horse, and just as I glance up he sails a loop of rope to try and circle Dirty Shirt. He didn't. That was the second time he shoots high. I tries to move quick, but my costume was made more for show than for speed. That loop of rope settles right over the rear of me, tightens behind my knees and over the small of my back, and poor Pokyhontas got uplifted.

I reckon that Pokyhontas didn't want to leave Custer there even if Rain-in-the-Face didn't have no more sword than a toothpick, 'cause when that rope hit me I got a strangle hold on Custer and we both moved away from there.

Me, I'm jack-knifed so that my toes are tickling my mustache and Sad is yelping like a trapped coyote pup. We turned over just once, swung in under the railing, where we seem to sort of hang up, and then, as far as I can see, the railing, platform, tent and all went with us.

Man, I'd say that the strain was great. I seemed to feel every muscle in my body stretch a foot and as we sailed into the air somebody reached up and took one of my moccasins off.

I lost Custer at an altitude of about orty feet and whe n I landed I picked a tub of lemonade to stop in, and then it seems that I took the tub along with me on a voyage of discovery. I'd say that Hassayampa and his bronc went regardless and nobody knows whither we might have wandered if that rope hadn't busted.

Anyway, I think it busted, 'cause all to once I gets relief from the cramps and the sandman visits Ike Harper.

Then along comes a million needles to penetrate my carcass and I feels my nervous system yank me to a sitting position.

I've got my back against a tent and right in front of me is Judge Steele and Old Testament. The sky pilot is kneeling in a prayerful attitude, while the old judge squats on his heels in an attitude of deep thought. The judge has got a piece of the busted platform in his hands and on his head, cocked over on one side, is a gallon tin bucket. A curl of lemon peel sticks out from under the edge and I opines that the judge must 'a' mixed with the retail end of the lemonade business.

"We—we will open with a pup-prayer," whispers Old Testament.

The old judge rocks on his heels and fondles that club.

"We will open with a spup-speech by me," he whispers right back.

"Prayer!"

"Speech!"

"Dearly beloved, we——"

Bam!

The old judge surges forward and taps Testament on the head and our preacher shuddered deep-like and pokes his long nose into the dirt.

Judge Steele pokes his nose toward the sky, shoves one hand inside his torn vest and begins—

"Friends, Romans and feller——"

Clank!

I sees that lard bucket hop off the judge's head and the rock nestled right up against my shin.

"He-heathen!" stutters a voice and I turns to behold what is left of Hassayampa.

He's got his head through one of the armholes of his vest, which makes him look like he had a stiff neck. The belt of his chaps has busted, and the two halves of his leather panties are wrinkled down around his feet. His hat is gone, and if his mind ain't gone too his eyes sure lie to me. He's got another rock in his hand.

"Pup-pick on a preacher, will you?" he yelps.

The old judge sets there on the ground, looking sort of dazed-like, and then he seems to fuss around inside of his bosom. He hauls out a long six-shooter, cocks it deliberate-like and takes aim at Hassayampa. Hassayampa don't mind. He sways on his heels and grins at me.

"How's every little th-thing, Ike?" he asks hoarse-like.

Bung!

The old judge ain't got much grip in his hands, and I sees the gun hop plumb over his head when it exploded.

"*Woof!*" grasps Hassayampa, swaying backward, and he sets down so hard that he bounced. He sets there making funny faces at me and hanging on to his equator.

The judge twists his neck and peers at his gun. Then he gets up and weaves away past a tent, talking to himself like a shepherd. I looks over at the suffering Hassayampa and says:

"Every little thing is all right, Hassayampa. How's it with you?"

He shakes his head and hugs himself some more.

"Think you're going to die?" I asks.

He takes a deep breath.

"*Hoo-o-o-off!* Hit me-uh-in the-uh-hoof! Belt-buckle. What do you know about that? *Hoo-o-o-off!*"

"Not much," says I. "He can't shoot no straighter than you can."

"Lead us not into temptation," states Old Testament, sitting up sort of jerky.

"Amen," says I and then I got up, shook the hoops and staves from around my neck and limped away.

I'm a peaceful person and I don't want to do anything to sully the atmosphere of this glorious celebration.

Then I runs in to Dirty Shirt—or rather I stumbles over his boots which are portruding out from under a tent. I hauls him out, and along with the haul comes Rain-in-the-Face. They're locked in each other's embrace, and from the looks of them I reckon it was a case of united we fell. I pries 'em apart and Dirty sets up. He looks at me and then at Rain-in-the-Face, who is sniffing at me with his swollen nose.

"Pokyhontas, you smell sour," says Rain-in-the-Face and then he scowls at Dirty Shirt.

"You here yet?" he asks.

"In spirit," agrees Dirty Shirt. "Physically I'm dead from my boots to my dandruff. How do you feel, you cross between a polecat and a totem-pole?"

"Feel of me!" snaps Mighty Jones. "Ain't you had enough yet? Maybe you'd like to bust up another historical group."

"Go home and put on some pants," advises Dirty. "You look like——! Come on, Ike. Let that delirium tremens Injun set there and make patent medicine if he wants to."

DON'T ask me all that happened that day. I'm just telling you what happened in my immediate vicinity. Some day I hope to be an innocent by-stander and be able to tell you everything, but as it is you've got to guess that the others didn't come out unscathed.

Me and Dirty found the remains of General Custer sitting near the location of the defunct speaker's stand. He looks up at us as we go past, but there ain't no recognition in his eyes.

"How goeth the battle, Cus?" I asks.

He stares straight ahead and raises his voice in tuneless song—

"I am nobodee-e-e-e-e's darling, nobodee-e-e-e ca-hares for me-e-e-e."

"Knocked sensible," declares Dirty, and we weaved along.

"Ike, you're an awful looking thing," states Dirty, looking me over. "You better shuck that buckskin Mother Hubbard before somebody accuses me of being a squaw-man. I hate scandal."

"By grab, I've been looking all over for you, Ike," exclaims a voice, and Pete Gonyer takes me by the arm. "Magpie wants to see you right away."

"What does he want?" I ask. "I'm all through being butchered to make a Dancing Prairie holiday, if anybody asks you. I'll go home if he wants me to, but that's all."

We follered Pete down to the bank of the river where mostly everybody is collected. Across the river, which is about fifty yards wide at this point, is hung a wide piece of canvas. A scaffolding has been built out from around a tree, and the canvas stretched on that. We stops at the edge and hears old Judge Steele proclaim:

"This here is authentic, I tell you. Ain't

I got the picture of it in my office? I sure have. While I've got a lot of respect for Custer and Lincoln, it ain't noways historically correct that they're to blame. Therefore it remains for the city of Piperock to hand honor where honor is due. I asks everybody to watch the great spectacle—the spectacle from which Fourth of July owes its being."

"Get on, Ike."

I turns and here is Pete Gonyer on a bronc. He's got one foot out of the stirrup, so I can get up, and like a darn fool I done it. I didn't know where we were going, but I do know that we went there.

Pete must 'a' picked a bronc what never carried double, 'cause it whirled around that multitude and we hit the water fifteen feet from the shore.

Man, I'd say that bronc could hop high and handsome, and them Pokyhontas clothes bellied out behind like a balloon.

Pete herded that animal straight for the bank and as soon as it got its feet on solid ground we changed ends so fast that I grabs Pete around the neck and my feet stood straight out. I made one complete turn, let loose, and when I hit the grass I glided about twenty feet on the seat of the pants I didn't have on—being as that costume consisted of hip-length leggin's which wouldn't go over my pants and a sort of a dress.

I got up sore. There is Magpie, "Tellurium" Woods, "Buck" Masterson and Pete looking at me. Tellurium and Buck are in their shirt-sleeves, with their pants rolled up, but Magpie is dressed in that same costume he put on that night in our cabin. That fedora hat don't fit sideways, so he ties it under his chin with a string. I looked down back of that canvas, and I seen a boat. Honest to grandma, that was the first boat I ever seen in Yaller Rock County. I caresses myself a few and then I squints at the bunch.

"Welcome, Ike," says Magpie.

"You're not!" says I.

"Aw, Ike, we needed another oarsman, and you're from Piperock."

"Originally from Missouri," says I. "What are you sheep-herders trying to pull off over here anyway?"

"Washington is going to cross the Delaware," states Magpie.

"All right," says I. "Let him cross it. It ain't my river."

"I reckon we better start, boys," says Magpie. "Come in, Ike."

"Not me! Never and not any!"

"You helped Curlew, Ike," he reminds me chiding-like.

"Yes, and take a look at me! I won't help nobody no more. I won't even help myself. You can all go plumb to thunder!"

I don't know anything about boats. I might paddle my own canoe if I had one, but I don't know how to row. Buck can't row, and neither can Tellurium or Pete.

In the front end of the boat stands Magpie, with one foot histed up on the end, and his hand still searching inside his shirt. That fedora sets almost on his forehead. The multitude lets out a whoop as we emerges and hits the current, which is fairly fast.

"Swing her up-stream!" yelps Magpie.

I hears a couple of shots ahead of us, so I drops my oar and ducks. I reckon that Buck took the same precaution, 'cause the boat starts whirling, being as all the motive power is on one side.

I peeks over the edge and here comes old Judge Steele hopping across the rocks like a rabbit, and right behind him comes Hassayampa. The judge hits the edge of the bank, hops high into the air and comes right down among us.

I seen Hassayampa stub his toe at the brink and he lands in the water.

"Pull for the shore!" yelps Magpie and just then the crowd splits.

I LOOKS up and for the first and last time in my life my eyes feast upon the Paradise Mounted Band. They rides right up to our landing place and spreads out about five feet apart. The crowd has forgotten us. Here is something new. They crowds around and gawps up at the musicians. I seen "Coyote" Calkins slide out his slip-horn, place it to his lips, wiggle it a couple of times and then music cometh from the four of them at once. Just once.

Ta-a-a-a, ra-a-a-a-a, dum!

The feller who said that music hath charms to sooth the savage beast never tried to play a horn from the deck of a half-broke bronc. Our boat just drifted to the bank below them as the music broke forth, and we never had a chance to back up.

The crowd never had any chance to go back either. The bank was about three feet high at that spot, and St. Patrick never made a cleaner job of them Irish snakes than those four broncs of the merry-makers. I seen Rain-in-the-Face hop high to get away from Three Stars' roan, but the bronc beat him to it, and Rain-in-the-Face got kicked half-way across the Delaware.

It ain't human nature to run up-hill to get out of trouble, so they all follers the lines of least resistance, which in this case led to water, and Washington wasn't the only one to cross the river.

I seen Coyote's bronc hurdle some of the crowd and go into the air right over our craft, and believe me I didn't wait for the crash. Ike Harper ain't no mermaid, but he sure did take to the water. I got my eyes and ears full of the unaccustomed fluid and then something seems to come down and crown me.

A weight seems to press down upon my mind and, like all drowning men, I grasps at a straw—and got a handful of hair. I hung on and I sure took a ride down the river. I remember I made a noise like a hardware store every time I hit a rock. After what seemed an hour I feels terry firma under my carcass. I looks up in time to see that I've got hold of—a bronc's tail—and then comes one awful clank.

It is sundown when I awake. I'm sore in every joint and I feels that all of my bones have been busted and are sticking out of my skin. My collar-bone is sticking me in the chin and every time I move it grates on the gravel.

After a while I gets nerve enough to open my eyes. Sitting there on that gravel bar beside me is Judge Steele, Old Testament and Hassayampa. They hears me rattle to a sitting position and they stares at me sort of pessimistic-like.

I nods at them and nearly unjoints my remaining bones in trying to get loose from the hoarse-voiced horn which encircles my frame.

"We'll open with a pup-prayer," states Old Testament hoarse-like.

"Speech," argues the judge, in a far-away voice.

"You let our preacher alone!" wails Hassayampa in a croaking whisper. "Dog-gone you, judge, I'll run you ragged again. I'm getting peeved."

I'm peeved, too. I got up on my feet and crowned Hassayampa with that horn. He sort of shudders deeper into the sand and murmurs—

"Hurrah for Custer!"

Then I tried to get back on the other side of the river. I'm bow-legged enough to let most of the river through, but I must 'a' slipped on a rock, 'cause I soon found that I'm drifting. I never knew before that I could swim. Man, I tried to stop. I knowed that a few thousand miles away this river reaches the ocean, and I don't like oceans.

Every time I got my feet on a rock the water comes along and turns me a flip-flop and I drifts regardless. The last time I went under I got mad and said to myself—

"Well, stay under then!"

Just about then I feels myself bump into something and I gets hauled high and dry. I spat out a gallon of alkali water and looks around.

I'm in the boat. There sets Magpie, Mike Pelly and Sad Samuels, and I ain't got nothing on them for looks. The boat is half-full of water, and they're setting in it like a bunch of hell-divers. They looks me over and then Magpie says:

"We might let him decide. He never had an opinion in his life, but this is a mooted question."

"Kinda mooted," nods Sad, woful-like, "kinda mooted."

"Kinda ——!" whines Mike and I notices that he's still wearing the brim of that high hat.

"Will you decide to the best of your ability, Ike?" asks Magpie, wringing water out of his mustache. "Without fear or favor will you speak from your heart?'

"I'll speak but I won't act," says I. "Ask me what thou wilt."

"The question is this, Ike: Paradise says Lincoln, Curlew says Custer and Piperock says Washington is the party responsible for this glorious day and date. Being a disinterested party we asks your opinion. Who do you think started it?"

I looks around at them bedraggled idiots and then at the water.

"I ain't no history hound," says I, "but if you leave it to me I'd cast my vote for Jonah. We've had a whale of a time to-day."

"Which is common sense and beats history," states Magpie and we all shook hands.

The Jabiru

by Arthur O. Friel

Author of "The Spider," "The Jaguar," etc.

YES, *senhores*, that white bird over there by the river-bank is a jabiru. He is not a large one—only about three feet high, I should say. You two North Americans have probably seen more than one of those big waders while you were exploring at the headwaters of the Amazon, and know that a full-grown bird is nearly as tall as a man. Ah, there he goes, up and away! Perhaps a fish took one of his long toes for a big worm and tried to gobble it. Ha, ha, ha!

He is a funny old bird, the jabiru. With his thin legs and bony knees and humped back, his long neck and head rising bare and black out of his white body and his huge beak looking like a great grin, he is droll enough to make a sick man smile. But, for all his awkwardness, he can fight if he has to, and when he does fight, *senhores*, look out for him. That clumsy beak of his can hit you in the face so hard as to knock you flat, and if it does not destroy one of your eyes you may be thankful.

You say that the jabiru reminds you of a bird called the stork, which you have seen in Europe and Africa, and of the adjutant-bird of India? I have not seen those birds, *senhores*, for I am only a rubber-worker of the Amazon and have not traveled widely like you. Yet I have heard of them, for there was a man here before you who said he had seen them, too—a man from your United States, who looked so much like our own bird that as soon as we saw him we named him "the Jabiru." And now that I am reminded of him, I will tell you about him as the steamer carries us on down the great river, homeward bound.

He was long and lank, with a sharp face and the largest nose I ever saw on a man. And he was stoop-shouldered and carried his head out in front of him so that he seemed to be reaching for something with his long beak. His hair was black, and he kept it cut close to his skull. Below that black hair his skinny neck was always red from sunburn, so that it looked like the jabiru's neck which, as you know, is red near the body and black higher up. His legs were long and thin and seemed all the thinner because, below his knees, he wore tight strips of cloth wound around in a spiral that went into his boots. He called them "puttees" and said they kept the bugs off his shanks. And he always wore a loose, white coat—yes, a coat, out there in the hot rubber-lands where most of us wear nothing at all between hat and belt. He said he needed it to carry around his note-books, and that a white one was cooler than a dark one. That coat, with his humping shoulders, was the only thing he needed to make him a complete jabiru.

Yet he was a wise man, if learning be wisdom, for he knew many things learned

from books and travel, and knew them well. He was always good-humored and had a slow, wide grin and never minded our calling him Jabiru. Sometimes, indeed, he would purposely amuse us by imitating that bird's stiff way of walking, thrusting out his nose in a way that made us howl with laughter. All the same, he could fight.

Like everything else that reaches the rubber-estates of the Javary region, where even food has to be brought in from outside, he came to us on a river-boat. We named him even before he set foot on our land. He was standing at the bow, squinting up the high bank at me and some other men who happened to be there at the headquarters of old *Coronel* Nunes, master of the great *seringal* where we worked. One of my mates said:

"*Deus meo!* Look at the big jabiru that has hopped on to that boat!"

We grinned at his joke and then, as we looked more closely and saw how truly the stranger resembled that bird, we laughed out loud. The man down below stared solemnly up at us, and we waited to see whether he would be angered, as most men are when laughed at. Then he grinned so suddenly that his face seemed to split, and called—

"*Boõ dia!*"

I wished him good day in return and liked him at once. So did the others—that is, all except Felipe Rojo, a Bolivian who worked among us because he was a refugee from his own country and who was a sour, surly sort of man. He was said to be a killer, this Rojo, whom the Bolivian police wanted, and, though none of us feared him, we did not like him and left him alone as much as possible.

Now, when we Brazilians stopped laughing and spoke in friendly fashion to the newcomer, Rojo laughed again, sneeringly, and spat down the river-bank. We scowled at this and saw that the North American was displeased by it, too. His grin faded out and he looked Rojo over as if he were an unpleasant insect. The Bolivian's face turned ugly, and I saw that these two men were likely to be enemies.

After that cool stare, the man down below paid no more attention to Rojo, but attended to getting out his baggage. When it was ashore he went to the house to see the *coronel*, and we looked rather curiously at the things he left behind, though there was nothing queer about them—a number of boxes and a couple of leather bags. While we were waiting for the word that we knew would soon come from the hospitable old *coronel*—an order to take this baggage to the house—we speculated on the nature of the stranger's business here, for he was not the kind of man one is likely to find in the bush. Somehow he made us think of cities and great buildings, but still he did not seem like a buyer of rubber. One of the men said in fun that he might have come to get acquainted with his feathered brother, the jabiru, and, after we got our orders and moved the boxes and bags into the *coronel's* place, we found that this joke was near the truth.

The newcomer, whose name was Grayson, came from a great college in your country where he taught younger men about the earth and the things on it. That is, he did this when he was at home, but, having money of his own, he spent more of his time traveling into strange parts of the world and seeing things there that most people know little about, and then writing pieces about them that he called "monographs." He had come to the headwaters of the Amazon to see whatever might interest him. His boxes contained much stuff for making photographs and held other things which he used now and then—a glass tube that showed how hot it was, a round glass that made a small thing look much bigger, and so on. But, as far as we could see, he brought no guns.

AT THIS time I had just recovered from a sickness due mostly to hardships I had suffered while a prisoner in the hands of some Peruvian robbers called "the Peccaries," who had raided my rubber-workings far out in the jungle and caused the death of all my men. It happened that in another district, not far from headquarters and near a little lake, the man in command of the rubber-workers got beriberi and died. Thus the *coronel* had one gang without a boss and one boss without a gang, so he put the two together and told me to take charge of the work in the lake district.

Also it happened that two men from that gang had quit and were going out, so the *coronel* gave me two others to take their places. One of these was the man Rojo.

I was not much pleased at having him with me, and the Bolivian did not seem to like it either, for he preferred to work far out in the deep jungle. Orders are orders, however, and so, the day after *Senhor* Grayson arrived, I took Rojo and the other man and we three went to our new place and took up our work there.

It was a good district and the men did their tasks well—even Rojo, who knew his business though he was disagreeable. So all went well for a while and I found time to prowl around the little lake nearby and see what I could see. This was not much, for along the shores were only the usual alligators and such things, and the water itself seemed harmless and empty, though I knew well enough that it probably was not. But, among the living things, I did see that there were several jabirus.

They were large, handsome birds—that is, handsome for jabirus—and not at all afraid of me, for our workmen had not bothered them. As I watched them I could not help thinking of the human jabiru who was now visiting the *coronel*, and after that I realized that perhaps he might like to come here and take pictures of these birds and observe their ways, so the next time I went down to headquarters I mentioned the matter to him. True enough, he was interested at once. He said that, as soon as he had finished studying some queer bug which he had just caught, he would come over to see us. Two days later he did come, with a couple of the *coronel's* black men carrying his picture-making outfit and other things, and settled down among us to stay a while.

We were all glad to see him, except Rojo. This man growled something when he saw the North American again, and spat on the ground. I spoke rather sharply to him, and he mumbled something in his throat and slouched away. The Jabiru watched him go and frowned, yet he did not look angry, merely thoughtful, as if studying the man and thinking of something else, too. Later on I saw him look several times at the Bolivian in this same way, and Rojo would stare back at him with naked hostility. What either of them was thinking about, I did not then know.

We threw up a little *tambo* for *Senhor* Grayson, where he could sling his hammock and have his things around him as he wanted them. We showed him the way to the lake, too, and the other paths we used, and after that he would go away by himself and stay most of the day, studying those jabirus or other creatures and coming quitely back before darkness shut down.

The pockets of his big coat were always bulging with things he carried out with him or brought back to look at, and he usually lugged a large camera, a folding three-legged stand to screw it on to, a *machete* to cut his way through any tangle he met and a sort of box slung from one shoulder to hold alive any small creature he might catch.

With all these to carry, he seemed to have no place for a gun, nor any desire to take one along. I spoke to him about this, warning him that he ought to have a rifle and offering to send to headquarters for one. He merely grinned his slow grin and said the animals liked him. He seemed to be right, for he always came back unharmed, and if anything ever attacked him he did not tell us about it. Still, it bothered me somewhat, because that region is no place for any man to be gunless.

The men spoke of this, too, among themselves, and, though none of them presumed to give him advice, still, by telling stories of attacks made on them or their friends by jaguars, serpents, and so on, they tried to show him that he needed a weapon. These tales were not told to him directly, of course, for in that case they would have seemed too much like the warning they were meant to be, but, at times, when we were lying about and smoking, some one of us would tell one of these stories in an idle way, as if merely to pass the time, and others would follow in the same natural manner. They were all true tales and such as should have made the Jabiru think, but the only effect they had was to make him tell stories in return—stories of strange places and people and beasts and birds, which would soon make us forget about guns.

ONE thing which I noticed was that Rojo, although he sat by himself and kept silent, always listened to the tales of the Jabiru. Often, though, he appeared not much interested in what the American was saying, and somehow it seemed to me that he came and listened because he thought the traveler might speak of other things, but, so far as I could see, the words for which he waited were not spoken. He would sit there with his hat

pulled over his eyes and his gaze on the Jabiru's face, until the talk died out; then he would go away. This puzzled me a little, but I did not think much of it, for he was a man of queer ways and, as long as he did his work well and made no trouble, I did not bother my head about him.

Then, one rainy day when the Jabiru was not rambling and our work was done, Rojo spoke. There had been more talk of guns—an argument between two of the men as to what was the best weapon. The Jabiru said nothing, and, when the argument died, there was a little silence. Suddenly the Bolivian, clearing his throat, made a growling noise and spat. Then to everybody's surprize, he asked the Jabiru a direct question—

"Why do you not carry a gun, *senhor?*"

The Jabiru looked lazily at him and said—

"Why should I?"

The two stared at each other a minute. In a sneering way Rojo then asked—

"Perhaps you are afraid of a gun, yes?"

The other's eyes narrowed but he only drawled—

"Perhaps."

Rojo's ugly face turned uglier and he growled—

"Any man that does not carry a gun in this jungle is a fool!"

We all sat very still waiting to see that the Jabiru would do. There was a good deal of truth in Rojo's statement, but we were angered by his insulting way of expressing it. Still, it was between him and the North American, and did not concern us, so we watched the visitor and listened.

He got up slowly and looked down at the Bolivian in an odd sort of way. Rojo sat where he was, though his muscles were tensed so that he might spring up if the other came at him. The Jabiru merely said—

"So you say."

His tone indicated that whatever Rojo might say was not worth noticing. Then he spoke to the rest of us.

"You fellows have been worrying because I did not drape a few rifles around myself. It has been quite amusing. Your stories have been very interesting, though, and I have enjoyed them. Don't worry about me. I have been taking care of myself for some years. As I told you, the wild things like me and so they do not attack me. As for men—well, now, as for men——"

He paused and a wide grin spread over his face. He snapped out one big bony fist at nothing, and the other hand came up in a swift drive that would have knocked a man sprawling. Then he jabbed and swung at the air, shambling around as awkwardly as he could, still grinning, until we roared with laughter. With his long arms thrashing at nothing at all, his skinny legs and big feet stalking around, his white coat flapping and his big nose thrusting forward, he looked so funny that even Rojo laughed, but, for all his clumsiness, I saw that his blows would be fast and powerful if he ever fought in earnest, and that he struck toward where a man's jaw and stomach would be, as if well trained in such use of his hands.

Still jabbing and swinging and breathing a little fast, he chanted a funny little song through his nose, like this:

> "Oh, I am a jabby old Jabiru!
> I spear red toads and gobble 'em too.
> I've a jab in my left and a kick in my right,
> And, when I land with both—good night!"

With a final sweeping swing he dropped his hands and laughed with the rest of us. I think we all realized that he could take care of himself in a hand-to-hand fight. But the thought came to me that this was well enough against a man who, like himself, used only his hands, but suppose the other man had a knife or a gun—then what? Still, that was his own affair.

After this came another thought. I noticed that he was looking squarely at Rojo and that, though his mouth was smiling, his eyes were not. Then that little song began to mean something more than a joke. As you probably know, *senhores*, the Spanish word *rojo* means red. The man Rojo looked somewhat like a toad—bulky and squat, with a blotchy face. The Jabiru had said he gobbled red toads. His droll fight with the air and his made-up song, funny as they seemed, were a warning to Rojo, and Rojo understood. His pouchy eyes glittered and his face seemed to bloat, but he did nothing—just sat there. When we began to talk again about other things, he rose and went away.

THE next day brought an open clash between these two. The rain had stopped, and our visitor decided not to go to the lake that morning, but to take some pictures of us at our work. He and I went around together and I watched him work, for I do not know much about

such matters, *senhores*, and I was interested to see just how he did it. He used his biggest camera this time, a cumbersome machine that he called a "view" camera.

It seemed to me that he took a long time to get it into position and make everything ready, but then I realized that he had come many miles for this and had to bring all his supplies, so he naturally wanted to make each picture perfect. I thought, also, that it seemed to work very slowly and I spoke about this.

He explained that in making a photograph everything depended on the power of the light and that here, in the thick woods, the light was dull and weak so that he had to let the camera stand for quite a long time. He told me, too, that if anything should shake the machine while it was working, or if a man should move about in front of it, the whole picture would be spoiled, so I took care not to touch the thing and had the men who were in the picture stand perfectly still until the job was done.

Now one of the spots he had chosen for a photograph was down the *estrada* which was run by Rojo, and when we reached that place we found that the Bolivian, taking up the rubber-milk along his line, had just arrived there, too. The Jabiru greeted him as pleasantly as any of the other men and told him he wanted to make a picture of him taking the little cups off the trees. Rojo scowled but did not refuse. I explained to him that he must not move while the thing was being done, but keep as still as the trees themselves. I was very careful to make him understand this, *senhores*, and to tell him that by moving he would ruin one of *Senhor* Grayson's valuable plates. I told him, also, to push his hat back from his face, but this he would not do—he even pulled it lower over his eyes. Though I did not like this, I said no more, for I thought his face did not matter—indeed, the picture might be prettier without it.

The Jabiru made ready, told Rojo not to move and pressed the rubber bulb. But as I watched him, it seemed to me that he had forgot something this time. Just what it was I did not know, but I was quite sure he had left out some movement he had made in taking the other pictures. Before I could remember what it was, I suddenly saw that Rojo was moving.

He deliberately moved his head, *senhores*, from side to side. Then he turned around and, after that, he stooped as if to pick up something. I shouted angrily, though I knew it was too late. He answered with a sneering grin:

"What? Is not the thing done yet? I thought it was over. That must be a very poor camera or else the *senhor* does not know how to use it."

I told him that he knew better and that he had done this from pure meanness. He only shrugged his shoulders and grinned in his nasty way. When I looked at the Jabiru I was surprized to find him grinning, too. Seeing my astonishment, he said:

"No harm done. I thought something like that might happen, so I took no picture. That was only a test. Now Lourenço, will you take that man's place? I can depend on you."

At that the Bolivian's grin disappeared, and when I laughed at him his face looked poisonous. He shuffled silently up past me, however, when I went to take his place, and stood where he was told. As the pathway was very narrow, the Jabiru put him behind the camera, while he himself stood beside it. I noticed that in this way the American was not letting Rojo get behind him and I was glad of it.

Then, after I took the position Rojo had had, I found out what it was that the photographer had left undone before, for he pulled out a black slide from the side of the machine and I realized that this slide had protected the plate during the test he had just made. After warning me to hold my position, he squeezed the bulb again, and I knew that now the real picture was being taken.

Suddenly the camera was knocked over and fell into the path. Over it fell Rojo He scrambled up at once and turned to look at the place where he had stood behind the camera.

"A snake!" he cried. "A *jararaca!*"

The Jabiru looked swiftly at him. Then he stepped into the place whence Rojo had sprung. As he did so, I saw Rojo draw back a foot as if to give the camera a sly kick.

"Rojo!" I snapped and jumped toward him.

He dropped the foot to the ground, turned and said—

"Beware of the snake!"

"There is no snake," said the Jabiru coming back to his overthrown camera.

Rojo swore that there was, that it was

close by his leg when he saw it and that, if he had not leaped aside, it would have struck him. We both knew he lied, and after the Jabiru had picked up his camera and thrown out the pieces of smashed plate, he told him so. In a cool, quiet tone, as if remarking only that it was a fine day, he said:

"Rojo, you are a liar. You are a dirty, underhanded sneak. You are a rotten, lousy mongrel, a putrid piece of floating scum, and I dislike to dirty my hands on you. But I tell you now that if you get within arm's length of me again, or touch one of my belongings, I will drive your teeth out through the back of your neck. Is that clear?"

Considering that he was a college professor, *senhores*, I thought that was quite clear.

Rojo was so astonished by such plain talk that he stood staring. As the words sank in, however, his face twisted and turned black. He threw his right hand to the *machete* at his belt but, before he drew it, he glanced at me and saw that I, too, had a hand closed around the hilt of my bush-knife. I said nothing but looked him in the eye, and, after a minute, he took away his hand and left the *machete* undrawn.

"Gringo," he snarled, "that is easier for you to say than to do. You are a jabiru, and red toads are not good meat for jabirus. Do not try to gobble more than you can swallow."

The Jabiru, having said his say, made no answer to this. He stood boring holes in Rojo with his eyes. After a minute the Bolivian's wicked stare wavered and he shifted his gaze and then turned and went away along his *estrada*. The American's right hand dropped, and, without thinking anything about it, I recalled that when Rojo had reached for his *machete*, that hand had risen to the height of the Jabiru's chest and had been hanging there since then as if he held a cigaret, though he was not smoking. Later on I was to remember this.

WHEN "the Red Toad" had gone, the Jabiru examined his camera carefully to see whether it was broken anywhere. Finding that it was not, he calmly said—

"Now, Lourenço, we can take our picture without further interruptions from that atavism." I came near asking him what an atavism was but did not want him to think me ignorant. As I knew he was calling Rojo another name, that was good enough for me. We made the photograph. Later on I saw it and it was perfect.

After we started back to the *tambo* I advised him to keep away from Rojo hereafter when he could and told him the man had a bad name. Up to this time we had never talked about any of the men, but now he asked me what I knew about this one.

"Only that he comes from Bolivia and is said to be a killer," I told him. "He has been among us for some time, but I have not seen much of him until recently. He never talks about himself. Probably he has reasons."

He nodded and asked:

"How long has he been here?"

"I think it is about a year, *senhor*."

"And do you know from what part of Bolivia he comes?"

"No, I do not," I said. "I know only what I have told you, and even that much I know only from what I have heard. Nobody has much to do with him."

"Has he ever spoken of the Rio Beni or of the Mapiri?" he went on.

"No, nor of any other river," I said. "If he is a killer, *senhor*—and I do not doubt that he is—then you can see why he would not speak of any place, because that might give some one a chance to trace him and his doings."

He nodded again and said:

"He may be a killer or he may be a murderer—there is a difference, you know; a murderer gives you no chance whatever. He may be only a sour thief. Ho-hum. Well, we shall see."

We said no more about the matter.

He lost little time, however, in following up the Bolivian. Later in the day, when most of us were sitting or lying about and talking of various things, I observed that the Jabiru looked around now and then as if waiting for some one. Before long, according to his custom, Rojo came and sat down behind the others to listen to what was said. The talk just then happened to be of the hardships endured by men in the jungle whose food had given out, a thing that had happened to several of us at different times and places. The Bolivian seemed to take no interest in the subject and did not even look at the men who were speaking—just sat wooden-faced, looking

down at the ground. At length there came a silence, and then the Jabiru spoke.

"One time down in Bolivia—" he said and then paused.

His gaze was directed over Rojo's head, and his eyes had that vacant look that shows a man is seeing something in his own mind—or is watching somebody while pretending not to. Rojo was looking at him and now Rojo's face was not so wooden.

"It was down on the Rio Mapiri——" The American paused again. Rojo started.

"An old friend of mine was making a study of the region and particularly of its people, the Lecco Indians. His name was Warren—Prof. Warren."

He pronounced the name very clearly. At the sound of it the Bolivian grew rigid.

"These Leccos seemed to be a different race from most of the Indians thereabouts, and Prof. Warren was much interested in them. He found them to be friendly, good-natured folks, expert swimmers and river-men, always ready to do anything for him, and trusty and reliable," continued the Jabiru. "And if the Leccos alone had been living there, my friend might be still alive, but there was also on this river a refugee Bolivian, a murderer who had fled there after killing a woman in La Paz. This man was called '*El Sapo*', which means 'The Toad'."

Rojo's lips fell open. He lifted a hand from the ground and put it back again. Something like fear showed in his face, and he gave a quick glance over his shoulder. Then his mouth shut again and he made no move, but his jaw-muscles showed that his teeth were set. The Jabiru still stared absently over his head, but I knew he had seen it all.

"At that time," he went on, "Dr. Warren did not know the Toad's record. He thought him merely a shiftless renegade who had drifted in there and stayed. The Leccos themselves seemed to know little about the man and to care less. But here is a thing I have noticed, my friends, while I have knocked around the world. No matter where a criminal goes, his crimes will follow him. Sooner or later, by some freak or other, his record will become known and, in the end, he will be destroyed by the things he has done. He may dodge them for a long time, but finally Fate springs her trap, and he is caught beyond hope of escape."

He stopped again to let this sink in. It apparently sunk into Rojo, at least, for his mouth twitched nervously and he glanced around at us. I thought I saw a tiny smile come and go on the Jabiru's lips. Soon he resumed his tale:

"So the doctor, not knowing the Toad's real ugliness, treated him in friendly fashion when they met and asked him questions about the country back from the river, just as he would ask his Indian friends. The Toad was sour and sullen and talked very little, but he knew something of the jungle around him, and the doctor got a little information from him. Also, he told the Toad he would pay him for any strange thing he might find that would be of interest to him, and now and then the man would bring him something odd and new, and of course the doctor would keep his promise.

"THEN, one day, the Toad asked him if he knew of some people quite a distance away from the river who lived in the trees, like monkeys.

"Of course the doctor was greatly interested at once. He had been in South America long enough to know that there are many strange things here of which the world knows nothing, and he knew that far back in early times there undoubtedly had been people who lived in trees and traveled back and forth like monkeys, swinging along by their hands. So it was perfectly possible that such beings might still exist in the swampy jungle, and he asked the Toad all about them.

"The Toad said they lived near a large, low lake and he had found them some time ago but did not know much about them; that he had seen two in the trees and shot one, thinking it was a very big monkey, but found it was a small man. He had not investigated further because these people were nothing to him. The doctor at once told him it would be worth something to him if he could find them again, and the Toad said he would try. And so the professor quickly got ready to make the trip to the lake of monkey-men.

"Before he went he asked some of the Leccos if they knew of such people. None of them did. This did not surprize the doctor, however, because he had noticed that practically the only thing the Leccos some of them to go into the bush with him did know was their river. When he asked

and find the men in the trees, they were not much interested, but said they would go if he wanted them.

"The Toad flatly declared, however, that he would take nobody but the doctor. When he was asked why, he said 'the more men, the more noise,' and declared that these tree-dwellers must be hunted quietly, like animals. He also said sneeringly that if the doctor was afraid to go into the jungle without a small army, he had better stay where he was. My friend, who was absolutely fearless, picked him up rather sharply at this. Since the whole trip depended on the Toad, he had his way, and the two went into the forest together, carrying photographic equipment and other valuable things.

"To make the story short, they found no monkey-men, nor anything but swamps. And when they were several days out, the Toad suddenly turned on the doctor, roped him to a tree and robbed him of everything. He cursed the doctor for a gringo fool, destroyed his photographic apparatus, took all the food and the rifles and even some of his victim's clothing, and went away, leaving the doctor to die of starvation and thirst.

"It would have been much more merciful to stab him."

With this the Jabiru dropped his gaze directly into Rojo's face, but Rojo now was holding himself still, and his expression was more wooden than ever. Only his eyes were set and strained, and he seemed not to be breathing. Nobody said anything. We all waited for the Jabiru to go on.

"You are wondering," he said presently, "how this ever became known. There was little likelihood that the Toad would ever reveal it, and the doctor, left bound and foodless far from any possible help—there was not much chance that he would live to tell of it. But that is just what happened. The doctor did live and he told of it."

Watching Rojo, it seemed to me that he almost sprang up.

"A murderous brute always blunders somewhere," the American continued deliberately. "The Toad blundered in three ways: in leaving the doctor to the torture of starvation instead of murdering him swiftly; in tying the ropes poorly; and in neglecting to take away a small compass the professor carried. After a long, patient struggle, the doctor succeeded in loosening his bonds and finally got out of them altogether. And then, without food or weapons, half naked, he began his terrible journey back to the Mapiri.

"He traveled for days, stumbling back over the faint trail he had left and eating anything that would keep life in him—awful things, things so repulsive that later on the mere thought of them made him vomit. But at last, nearly dead and half crazed, he reached the river. There one of the Leccos found him, and they cared for him until he was able to go out and get back home."

"But I thought you said he was dead, *senhor*," said one of the men.

"He is dead. He died soon after he reached New York. He died from the effects of his journey back to the river, and nothing else. The Toad is just as truly his murderer as if he had cut his throat."

"But was nothing done to that Toad?" some one asked.

"He had gone. Oh yes, some of the Leccos went after him, but they found his hut deserted and his boat gone and they got no trace of him, but sooner or later he will pay for what he did. I rather think it will be quite soon."

Then Rojo suddenly snarled. All looked at him. He turned the snarl into what sounded as if he were clearing his throat, and spat. Then he growled.

"Bah! There is no proof of this story."

"No?" The Jabiru smiled unpleasantly. "Plenty of proof. The Leccos all know the truth, for one thing. And whether there be be proof or not, it is now known to the police of all South America that the Toad, wanted for killing a woman in La Paz and for other things as bad, lived on the Mapiri and went elsewhere from there. Furthermore, the police of all South America know exactly what the Toad looks like. They have a very good photograph of him."

This time the Bolivian did spring up, his eyes glaring. Swiftly he caught himself, kicked at the ground, rubbed his leg and jerked out a curse, saying an ant had bitten him. The Jabiru went on easily:

"You see, the doctor was rather adept at taking photographs of people without their knowing it. One of his cameras was very small but had a fine lens, so that a picture taken with it could be made much larger and still remain clear. And once, when the Toad had brought something to him and was standing outside in a good

light, the doctor caught a snapshot of him while pretending to do something else—merely because he had a whim to do it. Afterward he developed the film and kept it with his others, so that when he returned to the States he had it along with the rest of his records.

"He got this out before he died and had me make enlargements from it, and after his death many more enlargements were made and sent to the police throughout this continent, together with the Toad's known record, which was obtained from La Paz. So you see, my friends, what I said about Fate pursuing a criminal is true. That little snapshot, taken for fun, has made it impossible for the Toad to go into any town in South America and sooner or later, hide where he may, he will be seen by some one who will recognize him. And, as I said, I rather think it will be soon."

SILENCE settled around us. One by one the men got up and went their ways, each pretending to have something to do. Every man of us knew that Rojo and the Toad were the same, and we left him as we would leave something rotten. Soon he stood there alone, facing the Jabiru. His mouth opened a couple of times and closed without saying anything. Before long he turned and went away, scowling at the ground.

Though I knew the men talked about this among themselves, nobody said anything to me or Rojo or *Senhor* Grayson. We all felt that the matter lay between the Jabiru and the Toad and we waited for whatever might happen next. We had not long to wait.

Senhor Grayson worked for a time making pictures out of his plates, so that if anything should happen to the plates themselves he would still have the photographs. A few of these did not please him, so he went about and made new exposures. So far as I could, I kept track of both him and Rojo—especially Rojo. They seemed to keep out of each other's way, however, and I found nothing to do except my regular duties. And then, one morning, the Jabiru quietly told us he had finished his studies here, thanked us for all our hospitality and said that, after making one more little trip to the lake, he would return to headquarters.

We looked for him to say something or perhaps do something to Rojo, but he did not. Since telling the story of the Toad he had acted as if Rojo did not exist. Now he got ready for his last visit to the lake and went out as usual. Soon after that I went along the Bolivian's *estrada* to make sure that he was at work.

He was not.

Swiftly I went over both his pathways among the rubber-trees. He was not there. Then I hurried back to the little *tambo* where he lived. He was not there, either, so I started straight for the lake.

Reaching it, at first I saw nothing but the lonely water. Neither Jabiru nor Toad was in sight, and I heard nothing unusual. Then, looking around, I saw a jabiru standing in the water—a real jabiru—and the big bird was watching something on the bank. Quickly but quietly I slipped through the bush toward that place, and, as I neared it, I heard a voice—the voice of Rojo, low and hoarse.

"No, *senhor*, you are not going back to headquarters," said the voice. "You are going to stay here at this little lake, among your jabirus—and the alligators. It was very kind of you to show me how I blundered with that pig of a doctor. I will not blunder this time. I shall be back at my work very soon—before anybody knows I am away from it—and you, gringo, will be gone forever."

I worked up to a place where I could see. I got so near that I could almost have jumped on them, but they were watching each other so closely that neither of them heard me. They were in a little open space at the top of the bank, which dipped down steeply into the lake. The Jabiru's camera and other things lay on the ground, and he was fronting the Toad, standing steady, his right hand hovering easily in the air before his chest, as if holding a cigaret. The Toad, his venomous face dark with hate, was half crouching with his *machete* gleaming in one fist.

"Quite interesting," said the Jabiru. "Just what do you propose to do?"

"Not very much, gringo—only to cut out your bowels and then throw you to the alligators. See, there are two large ones lying there now, just below the bank, waiting for you. When you are sought, the seekers will find only this place where you fell into the water. I will take care of the blood you leave behind, so that it will not show.

"I am really quite clever in my own stupid way, *senhor*. Not so clever as you, it is true. You are so wise that you do not even carry a gun and every one loves you. Ha, ha, ha!"

His laugh was a horrible growling sound. He twitched the *machete* a little, as if wanting to see the American flinch from it, but the Jabiru stood unmoved.

"I see," he said quietly. "But what good will that do you?"

"What good? Much good, fool!" mocked the Toad. "It will keep you from telling the police where I am. It will pay you for putting all the police after me. It will give me the pleasure of seeing you squirm with the knife in your belly, you ——— ———! And it will put one more cursed *Yanqui* out of the world."

"I see," said the Jabiru again. "But before you perform this delicate little operation, tell me something: Why do you hate Yankees?"

The Toad's face twisted and he spat savagely. He cursed all North Americans with vile, filthy curses, and then he snarled:

"My woman in La Paz, she left me for a gringo miner. But she paid for it. I fixed her! And I would have fixed him, too, the dog, if— if———"

"If you had not been too much afraid of his gun and too busy in running away from him!" suddenly sneered the Jabiru. "I know all about that. Now, drop that knife!"

AS he spoke he took a swift step backward. That right hand, hanging in the air, moved so fast it seemed a blur. Blue steel gleamed in the sunlight, and both Rojo and I nearly dropped with astonishment. The Jabiru was not gunless after all. In his fist was a big Colt revolver, and it pointed straight at the Toad's stomach.

Rojo's jaw fell. He stood as if paralyzed, staring at that gun. His face turned dirty white.

"Drop it!" snapped the Jabiru.

The Toad, in a dazed way, dropped it.

"Back up!" barked the American, shoving the revolver forward.

Rojo backed. The Jabiru walked over to the *machete* and, without taking eyes or gun off his man, picked it up and threw it into the lake. Then he made him stand with his hands up while he also got Rojo's rifle, leaning against a tree, and threw that after the bush-knife. When he turned back after pitching the rifle into the water, his revolver had disappeared as suddenly as it had come out.

With his big fists on his hips, elbows sticking out sharply on each side, long nose thrust out and shoulders humped up, he stood boring his eyes into the ugly face of the Toad, who scowled back but licked his lips in a scared way.

"Well, Mr. Toad," said the professor, "your dainty little scheme to eviscerate me seems to have slipped a cog or two. Also, you have proved anew what I said about Fate. If you had not followed me this morning you might have had some chance to escape—not a very good chance, but still a chance. But no, you had to sneak after me, hoping to add one more cowardly murder to your string, and you had to tell me certain things I wanted to know, so that now you have no chance whatever. Permit me to call your attention to an interesting point in natural history: A toad who expects to put over anything on a jabiru needs to get up early and hop fast.

"And now, since you were so kind as to give me specific information as to what was coming to me, I will reciprocate. First, I am going to square accounts with you, so far as I can, for my friend Dr. Warren. I am going to beat you up until you are like jelly. In fact, I may break a few of your bones before I finish that part of the program. We shall see. Believe me, I am very thorough in anything I undertake and I shall devote my best energies to the task now at hand.

"When that job is complete, I shall drag you out and see that you are delivered to the police of Bolivia, who will probably permit you to rot for some time in jail. I understand that the Bolivian jails are admirably adapted to the decomposition of prisoners. And when, finally, the courts condescend to dispose of you—well, you know as well as I what your finish will be."

Evidently Rojo knew. A sort of whining grunt broke from him and he jumped for the bush. But the Jabiru was ready for that. One of those big fists lashed out, and Rojo went spinning and sprawling to the ground. The American promptly kicked him up and knocked him down again. When the Toad arose and began desperately to fight back, he settled down to do the

thorough job he had promised. You may believe me, *senhores*, he had not promised more than he could do.

With a knife or a gun, the Toad may have been a good fighter. I do not know, for I never saw him fight with either. I think, though, that he was only what the Jabiru had called him—a cowardly murderer. Whether that be so or not, he could do no real damage bare-handed. Not that he used his hands alone—he bit and kicked, too, and tried to gouge and throw the American to the ground where he could choke him. But about all he succeeded in doing was to make the Jabiru's long nose bleed.

When the Toad lowered his head and rushed, an up-swinging fist would smash into his face and stop him. When he tried to protect his head, blows like bullets would shoot into his stomach and knock gasping groans out of him. When his arms dropped, the Jabiru's fists would crack like gunshots against his face. His kicks the Jabiru avoided somehow, and if he managed to clinch and bite, the American would get some sudden twisting hold on him and throw him hard.

Always those big fists were hammering away at him, sometimes hitting him so fast that he could not even fall down—they would catch him falling and knock him the other way. It was not long before he gave up trying to outfight the Jabiru and strove only to escape into the jungle.

But even this he could not do. The Jabiru was always in front of him, smothering him in a hurricane of blows. There was nothing funny or clumsy now about the lanky man from the north. He worked like a swift, sure machine—a terrible machine that would never stop until the Toad was smashed into a shapeless pulp. The Toad was smashed. He was beaten until he went down and stayed down, battered and bloody and broken.

He whined and groveled on the ground and he sobbed in fear and pain as he begged for mercy. The Jabiru, with sweat pouring from him and breath whistling in his throat, stood glaring at him while he breathed a moment. Then he replied:

"Did you give the doctor mercy? Did you give that little woman in La Paz mercy? Stand up, you sniveling swine! I'm just beginning to get warmed up to this job. Up on your legs!"

But Rojo would not get up. The Jabiru stooped and grabbed him and yanked him up, but before he could hit him again the Toad squirmed away and staggered toward the lake. Three reeling steps brought him to the steep bank. The Jabiru, watching, jumped after him, but too late. With a howl the Toad threw himself out into the water.

He must have been insane with fear, *senhores*, to do such a thing, or perhaps every idea had been beaten out of him except the blind thought of escaping further punishment. At the sound of the splash I jumped out of the bush and ran to the edge. I saw him come to the surface, turn in the water and strike out for shore farther down the bank where the jungle was thick. The thought flashed though my mind that the Jabiru could easily shoot him, but he did nothing of the kind. I heard him grunt—

"Good ——!"

TWO dull things, floating near the swimming Toad, moved. The water swirled as they sank. Suddenly the Toad stopped as if anchored. His mouth opened in a hoarse scream. The sound was drowned in a bubbling gurgle. His head went under. For a second his hands thrashed above the water, then they too were drawn down. The water boiled, and the end of a big tail came out and splashed back, as the two great reptiles down below fought for their prey. Bubbles came up. A red stain grew and spread. Then the water smoothed out, and all was quiet except for the lapping of ripples against the bank below us.

The Jabiru drew a long sigh. For the first time he became aware that I was there. He stared at me and I at him, and we both wiped sweat from our faces.

"Well, Lourenço," he said slowly, "I rather think that closes the Toad's account."

"I think so, *senhor*," I answered.

We turned away, picked up his camera and other things and then went back toward the *tambo*.

Before we reached it, though, I said—

"Pardon me, *senhor*, but where do you carry that gun of yours? I never saw it before."

"No, I know you never did," he replied. "And you never saw me without a coat, did you?"

I thought and shook my head. He stopped, set the camera down and said—

"I have often found it just as well, Lourenço, not to advertise the fact that I pack a gun."

While he spoke his right hand rose carelessly to his chest.

"Now look closely."

His hand flashed inside his loose coat and out again, quicker than I could breathe, and it brought the revolver with it. Then his left hand drew the coat back, and I saw a leather sheath hanging down his left side, under the arm. With another swift move he jabbed the gun back into its scabbard and dropped the coat and stood there, apparently unarmed.

"I see," said I and we went on.

No wonder, I thought, that he found it amusing to have us tell tales meant to warn him.

Back at the *tambo* he packed his equipment for the trip back through the jungle to headquarters. While he was doing so I asked him:

"Have you one of those pictures of the Toad made by the Dr. Warren? I should like to see it."

He settled back on his heels and looked up at me with a queer expression, and his slow grin, grew and widened under his long nose. Then he said:

"No, I haven't. And neither has anybody else. There never was such a picture."

I stared and he chuckled. Then he added:

"Friend Lourenço, I will admit to you—between ourselves, of course—that I am something of a liar. The tale I told to you men was true up to the point where I brought in the photograph. Right there was where I began improving on the truth.

"If there had been such a photograph, I surely would have recognized the Toad at once. There wasn't. The doctor took many pictures of the Leccos but never wasted a film on the Toad, whom he considered only a worthless bit of flotsam. After his betrayal and his awful journey to the river, however, he wished he had taken one, so that he could give it to the police of La Paz on his way out.

"It was then too late and all he could do was to tell his story and get the Toad's record, which was a bad one. The police remembered him well and said they would send men after him. The doctor had not much faith in their ability to get him, though, nor had I. When he and I talked about it, we agreed that if only there was a good picture of the Toad it might help greatly in causing his capture somewhere, as it could be sent to the police of all South America. But, as I say, there was no picture."

"Then how did you know the Toad?" I asked. "And why did you tell that story?"

"I didn't know him. I only suspected him. The first time I saw him I thought he looked like a toad. Before long I began to wonder if he were the Toad who had put my old friend to such torment. The more I saw of him, the stronger this suspicion became, for he was just such a man as the doctor had described. When you told me he was from Bolivia and a killer, I was almost sure of it, so I told the story to see what effect it would have on him and I put in the part about the photograph for the same reason. If he were not the Toad, it wouldn't bother him. If he were the Toad, it would set fear to gnawing at his brain and might drive him to a show-down, or at any rate it would make him afraid to go out of the bush, so that he would be likely to stay here until I could talk with the *coronel* and perhaps have him held for the authorities.

"So you see, Lourenço, that, though I had no photograph by which to identify him, I had something just as good—a big suspicion and the ability to tell a good lie. After he swallowed that lie his own guilty fear did the rest. And thus endeth the chapter."

He resumed his packing. When it was done he asked me to care for his things until the *coronel's* black men came for them and then he shook hands around, wished us good luck and stalked away on the out-trail to headquarters. We watched his big white coat go down the dark path and slide around a bush and fade out of sight. He was gone.

I never saw him again. When next I went to the *coronel's* place he had left there to study other things in other places. Where he went I do not know, but I do know that wherever he may be, with his shambling walk and his queer face and his slow grin, he is able to take care of himself and to avenge wrongs done to his friends. He spoke true words to Rojo that last day by the lake. Any toad, or other creature, that would outwit the Jabiru must rise very early and hop very fast.

The Redemption of Bill Holland

by G·A·Wells

Author of "Promoters," "The Speck in the Apple," etc.

"BUCKS" HARTLEY, superintendent of the Stone Division of the L. P. & S., looked up as Delaney, division operator, entered his private office on the second floor of the Terminal Building at Gordonsburg.

"Well, Delaney?" he said.

"Man out there wants to see you," replied the operator with a flirt of his head to indicate the outer office.

The superintendent frowned. This was his busy day and there were a thousand and one things to be attended to.

"Who is he?" he asked.

"Didn't give any name; just asked me to say that you were mutually acquainted."

"Humph! What does he look like?"

"Looks like a bum, sir, if you want my private opinion. I think he's looking for a job of some sort, though he didn't say."

"Tell him we hire Saturdays," said Hartley, turning to his work.

"Yes, sir."

The division operator departed. In a few moments he returned.

"He insists on seeing you, Mr. Hartley," he said apologetically when the superintendent looked up for the second time. "I'd be glad to kick him down-stairs if he wasn't such a whopper. He looks like forty horsepower."

"Send him in!" snapped Hartley. "I'll take him down a peg or two for his impudence."

Once more the division operator left the room and shortly thereafter appeared in his stead a strapping giant of a man who all but filled the doorway with his bulk.

He was about twenty-seven, with a rugged and unusually florid face. He might have been called handsome if properly groomed, but very little by way of compliment could be said about his clothes and the two or three days growth of beard on his face gave his flesh a dirty tint. The predominant impression gained from a quick glance at his face was that here was a hard drinker.

There were swollen flesh-pads under his bloodshot eyes.

The superintendent had been waiting for the disturber of his peace with blazing eyes and a cutting tirade balanced on the tip of his tongue; he meant to squelch such impertinence. But when his insistent caller stopped just within the doorway and

regarded him smilingly, Bucks Hartley's jaw dropped.

"Darn your hide!" he exclaimed.

"Howdy, Mr. Hartley," greeted the caller, his smile broadening.

He advanced to the superintendent's desk.

His assurance and nonchalance grated on Hartley's nerves and he at once became hostile.

"If I had known it was you, Holland, you couldn't have got in here with dynamite," he growled.

"That's why I didn't tell my announcer any more than I had to," replied the big man complacently. "May I sit down?"

Without waiting for the superintendent either to grant or refuse his request he seated himself in a chair opposite Hartley. The chief of the Stone Division glared at him ferociously.

"Make it short, Holland. What do you want?" he rasped.

"Job," obeyed the other literally.

"Nothing doing; interview closed," said Hartley with a wave of his hand to imply finality.

"I thought you'd say that,"said the big man in a crestfallen tone.

"The devil you did! Say, has the booze driven you bugs? Do you think I haven't got anthing else to do with my time but hand it out to every bum that comes along asking for a bit of it?"

The caller's face clouded but was clear and serene again in a moment.

"I can't object to the word, Mr. Hartley; I'm a bum, all right," he said. "It hurts to have my attention called to the fact, though."

"Well, are you blaming me with it?" the other demanded hotly.

"I don't blame anybody but myself, sir. I've been too friendly with John Barleycorn, that's all."

That frank confession brought a nod of agreement from the superintendent.

"I think I told you some time ago how that friendship would eventually turn out," he said with an I-told-you-so air.

"I remember."

"You worked for me when I was chief dispatcher of the River Division over on the B. & S., Holland," Hartley went on sternly. "I gave you every chance in the world to make good. More than once I strained at a gnat and swallowed a buzzard to keep you out of trouble.

"I pretended to believe all that bunk about your going for a bucket of water or being out fixing your semaphore light. As a matter of fact you stayed up and loafed around the saloons all day; then when you tried to stand your trick at night the booze made your eyelids heavy. Oh, I know all about it, son, so you needn't try to bluster out of it.

"But in spite of it I liked you personally, Holland. Besides, you were a whale of an operator and we needed men like you in our business. I don't mind telling you now that if you had met me half-way you could have had a dispatcher's trick over there almost any old time. You threw me down cold."

"I appreciated all you did for me, sir," murmured the other penitently.

"Fine way you showed it," was the caustic reply. "You broke the camel's back the night you forgot that train order and let No. 106 slide into that extra west—— two firemen and an engineer slaughtered like sheep. That's a pretty good record."

"My——! Don't, Mr. Hartley!"cried the big man.

"I thought maybe you'd forgotten it," remarked the superintendent cynically.

"Forgotten it——! I haven't done anything but think about it these two years since it happened!" Holland grasped chokingly. "It's haunted me—haunted me till I wished I was dead! But I was too cowardly to kill myself. I tried to drown it out in drink, but even then those three faces came up to torture me. I see them all the time! God A'mighty, Mr. Hartley, you don't know what I've been through the last two years!"

"And whose fault is it? It was shown at the inquiry that you were drunk at the time, Holland," the superintendent went on relentlessly. "If you hadn't had a clever lawyer at your trial to get you free on a technicality, you'd be doing time in the pen right now. You know it!"

"I've often cursed that lawyer for getting me free," half moaned the other.

"I shouldn't wonder," said Hartley. "And still you've got the guts to come here and ask me for another chance?" he snorted.

"Yes, sir," the big man replied meekly, in control of himself again.

"Pure gall!"

"I'm down and out, sir. I've been blacklisted everywhere, from coast to coast. I've

been working like a common laborer wherever I could get a job."

"And blowed your earnings for drink, eh?"

Holland said nothing.

"Well, I'm not in the money-lending business, Holland."

"I didn't ask you to stake me, sir. What I want is a chance to make good—a job. Perhaps if I made good those faces would go away. I want to make good with you particularly, Mr. Hartley. I'd rather redeem myself in your eyes than go to heaven, sir."

The superintendent laughed bitterly.

"Driveling sentimentality! Bunk!" he derided.

"I've quit drinking."

Hartley gave his caller a doubting stare.

"Have they quit making it?" he grunted.

"For me, yes, sir," replied Holland with an emphatic nod. "I've had my last drink.'

"Until you get to the next saloon."

"You're unjust, Mr. Hartley," responded the big man reproachfully. "I know you've got good reason for doubting me; I played the low-down on you about the booze. But I've quit; I haven't had a drink for nearly two months. I swear I haven't."

"Aw, tell that to the dicky birds," scoffed the superintendent. "I wasn't born yesterday."

"That's the truth, so help me!" declared Holland. "I've had a thousand chances to drink since I quit and I turned 'em all down. I'm awake at last; I'm done with booze forever. This is a dry state. I know I won't touch the stuff under such conditions."

"Bosh! Every other man you meet on the street in this town is a bootlegger, Holland, and you can get all the booze you want any time you want it."

"There are no saloons, anyway," contended the big man stoutly. "The saloons make most drinkers, you know. But I didn't come here to argue prohibition with you, Mr. Hartley. I came for a job. Do I get it?"

"Not in a thousand years!"

"Mr. Hartley, I'm on the blacklist everywhere else."

"And are you —— fool enough to think that I, knowing more about you than the rest, would give you a clear title?" said Hartley angrily.

"You are my only hope, sir," said the big man plaintively.

"Then let me kill your only hope with a big and final no!"

"Just one more chance," pleaded Holland.

"Not today," said the superintendent after an interval of silent meditation. "You might make good; then again you might not. Frankly, I don't believe you would; the evidence is all against you. You have saturated yourself with whisky until you are poisoned through and through. You've got blood on your hands, Holland, and I'm not going to be criminally negligent by giving you the chance to add to it. I'm sorry, but I can do nothing for you."

There was finality in the superintendent's voice that precluded all further argument of the subject. Holland got up slowly.

"All right, Mr. Hartley, I know how to take my medicine," he said grimly. "I've danced and now I've got to settle with the fiddler. I guess I'd do the same as you if our positions were reversed. I'm much obliged to you just the same, sir."

Holland did not hear the superintendent's scornful "Humph!" as he went out. Hartley sat for a few moments staring speculatively at the door through which his late visitor had disappeared; then, with a shrug of his shoulders, he picked up the letter he had dropped at Holland's entrance.

"A drunkard's grave for yours, Holland," he muttered to himself.

WHEN Bill Holland had passed down the stairs from the second floor of the Terminal Building after his fruitless interview with Bucks Hartley, he stood for a few moments in indecision, looking up and down the street. For him the compass meant nothing; all directions were the same. At that moment he was one of the most disheartened and discouraged men on the face of the earth. In his pocket he had just four silver dollars and some odd change.

He had left his last job, working as an ordinary day laborer for a contractor in a city one hundred miles distant, on the impulse of the moment. He had been actuated by the hope, forlorn as it seemed, of getting a job from Bucks Hartley, whose name and official status he had seen on a bulletin in the railroad station of the city where he had been working.

Logically, Bucks Hartley was the last man in all the world to whom he should have applied for a job, for Hartley, as he had said,

knew perhaps more about Holland than any other man. And for the reason of his having given Holland every advantage for proving himself worthy of trust, which advantages Holland had deliberately thrown aside, Holland should have avoided Hartley.

But Holland, laboring with his hands when he knew full well that his special knowledge entitled him to labor with brain, was thoroughly disgusted with himself. He felt that he was gradually sinking into the bottomless pit of degradation from which there was no escape. He sincerely desired to reform himself, to rehabilitate himself as a man among men; and every minute of delay toward that end he knew increased the difficulty of its accomplishment.

Most of all he wanted to be placed in a position similar to that which he had occupied that fatal night two years before. That night two years gone, when, drunk, he had neglected to set his signal board, thus letting a train for which he had stopping orders pass by his station and hurl itself against an opposing train—that night which had been burned indelibly into his memory. He looked back upon it with sickening horror, though it must be confessed that he had somewhat benumbed his sensibilities with whisky in the meanwhile, and shame and remorse had lost some of their acuteness.

And now Bucks Hartley, his last and only hope of again rising to grace, had disappointed him. His one-time friend and defender for a hundred infractions of iron-clad railroad rules had ridiculed his declarations of sobriety and cast him off. His last prop had been knocked from under him.

In spite of his statement that he knew how to take his medicine, Holland keenly resented Hartley's attitude toward him; the superintendent might have given him at least one more chance, he thought. He was sure that he would have made good if that one more chance had not been denied him. In the narrowness of his resentfulness toward Hartley, he completely forgot that he had had not one but many chances to make good. Had he considered that fact, perhaps his rising anger toward Bucks Hartley would have been mitigated.

"Mister, got a match?" A sudden voice at Holland's elbow broke in upon his unpleasant thought.

He turned his head to see a shabbily dressed individual standing beside him, sizing him up and down. The man held an unlighted cigaret in one hand. His eyes were furtive and never at rest. Holland gave him the match and listlessly watched him light the cigaret.

"Lookin' for a drink, pard?" the fellow said guardedly.

Holland hadn't even been thinking of a drink. But a man with all the earmarks of the hard drinker, such as Holland possessed, could not go undetected by such a man as the stranger, who made his illicit living by bootlegging whisky. It was his business to spot prospective customers, and he knew his man as surely as he knew himself.

All of Holland's good resolutions went by the board as if he had never made them, and he rose to the stranger's bait like a hungry trout.

"I'm down and out for good, so what's the use trying to get back?" was the thought that flashed through his head.

"I've got a quart you can have for three dollars," urged the booze-runner.

Holland's answer was to put a hand into his pocket and bring forth three silver dollars, which, after the stranger had pulled him back into the doorway before which they stood, he exchanged for the quart bottle of whisky the stranger pulled from under his coat.

Late that afternoon, while on his way home, Bucks Hartley met his former friend Holland on the street. He gave the big man a wide berth, for surely Holland needed all the room he could get. In the vernacular of the day, he was full to the gills and could scarcely navigate. He espied the superintendent and lurched toward him.

"'Lo, there, Bucks," he hailed thickly. "'Lo Bucky, ol' sport. When d'I get that job, Bucky?"

The superintendent avoided the big man by stepping out into the gutter. Then, without saying a word, but with a superior sort of smile on his face, he went on his way.

IN HIS drunken wanderings Holland's wayward legs carried him at last, about midnight, to the railroad yards. The open door of a box car loomed invitingly before him and with an effort, for the whisky had all but paralyzed him, he managed to climb into the car. He staggered into a far corner and fell, rather than lay, down and was almost at once asleep.

The jerking and banging of the car, great as

it was, was insufficient to disturb his alcoholic slumbers, and he did not know when a switch engine picked up the car and shunted it into a train making up for the south. Nor was the rumble and lurch of the car, as it sped southward in a long train of its fellows, enough to arouse him to a consciousness of the situation.

A little after dawn, when the train stopped at a station to permit the engine to take water, a brakeman, passing along the side of the train in search for leaks in the air line, threw the rays of his lantern into the car and discovered the sleeping man.

"All out for Hoboburg, you slab-footed sleeping beauty!" yelled the brakeman.

The roar of the voice penetrated to Holland's consciousness, the effects of his debauch having worn off to that extent, and he sat up and blinked uncertainly at the brakeman.

"Prance out o' there, Willy, or I'll step in and break you up," called the brakeman. "Move lively!" he barked when Holland seemed to hesitate.

Holland detected menace in the voice and slowly lifted his huge body to its feet, stood swaying a moment, then, supporting himself against the wall of the car, made his way to the door. Whether he fell or was jerked from the car he was in no condition to know certainly; but, at any rate, he left the car door in a hurry and pitched to the ground on his stomach. His unprotected face plowed along a cinder station-platform.

The caboose of the train had flicked around a curve in the track before Holland regained enough sense to rise to his feet. His fall from the car had just about sobered him, and, though weak and a little unsteady on his feet, he was in full control of reasoning powers.

He found that he was standing on what purported to be a depot platform, though the rough board shack but a few yards away could scarcely be called a depot without a stretch of the imagination. It was a one-room affair about ten by twelve feet in size, with a padlocked door in front and a small, square window in the side. A semaphore mast reared itself before the structure, and from a pole near-by a pair of wires, apparently telegraphic, ran down through the roof.

Holland let his gaze rove about the surrounding landscape. The depot was the only building to be seen. Hills were everywhere, all shrouded in masses of trees and undergrowth. Down the track a little way a water-tank stood on its tripod, though the source of its supply was not in evidence. In the other direction, about the same distance away, two rusty rails diverged from the main line to form a spur track that almost immediately lost itself among the trees. The scene was a gloomy and oppressive one.

"Well, what do you think of 'er, cap?" spoke a voice behind Holland.

He turned to look into the grinning face of a stockily-built man of about his own age. This man wore a suit of patched overalls entirely covered with a fine white dust. A pair of heavy brogans encased his feet; a broad-brimmed felt hat covered his head. The blue cotton shirt he wore was open at the throat to expose a thick column of bronzed neck and a hairy chest.

There was nothing appealing about the man; he was even forbidding in appearance. But the desire for human companionship is a compelling trait, and Holland instantly decided to be friendly toward the stranger. Besides, he was beginning to feel the pangs of hunger.

"Howdy," he greeted amiably. "You about scared me to death, then."

The stranger puckered his lips and shot a stream of amber juice with unerring accuracy at a hornet on a clod of mud a dozen feet away.

"A man as big as you ain't got no business bein' scared," he said blandly. He jerked an elbow in the direction taken by the train. "Got throwed off, didn't you?"

"Yes, —— 'em!" snarled Holland.

"That's their way," said the other. "Railroads ain't no good."

He spat disgustedly. In his present state of mind Holland quite agreed with that all-inclusive condemnation of the transportation companies.

"I wasn't hurting their train, was I?" he wanted to know.

The stranger grinned in enjoyment of the big man's wrath.

"Mebbe they was afraid you'd throw her off an' wreck her," he suggested.

Holland put a hand to his bruised and paining face and brought it away stained with blood. He swore under his breath.

"They ought to be wrecked for kicking a man off and near breaking his neck like they did me!" he vowed.

The other man spent a long interval studying Holland through his half-closed eyes.

Holland paid him no attention but kept up a mumbled fire of imprecations directed at all railroads in general and the L. P. & S. in particular. Bucks Hartley and the brakeman who had thrown him off the train came in for their share.

Finally the stranger pulled a partly filled bottle of whisky from a rear pocket of his overalls and proffered it to Holland. As if it were second nature and no thoughts of temperance had ever entered his head, the big man accepted the bottle and drank. He returned the bottle to its owner, who took a swig himself and restored the bottle to his pocket.

Holland offered no thanks for the much desired drink, but he was grateful for it, none the less. It was a life-saver and that act of voluntary generosity on the part of the stranger did a service for both of them.

"You don't like the railroads none, eh?" spoke the stranger.

"What have they ever done for me to make me love 'em?" growled Holland. "I'm blacklisted on every pike in the country and can't get a job for love or money. I've got good reason to hate 'em, believe me. I wish to —— I knew some way to get square! I'd show 'em who they were throwing off!"

He spoke vindictively. Another interval of silent inspection by the stranger followed this sally.

"You mean that?" questioned the man.

"Think I'm talking to hear the sound of my own voice?" retorted Holland.

"I ain't got no use for 'em myself," said the other man tentatively. "Mebbe I've got reasons to hate 'em."

"What did they ever do to you?" asked Holland in an evidently deprecating tone.

"Enough, I reckon," was the reply. "Mebbe you wouldn't believe me if I was to tell you that right this minute the railroad is tryin' to starve me to death."

"Can't say that I would."

"All right! I'll tell you about it. Let's have another drink first."

The steady drinker can never do anything without first drinking. That is one of John Barleycorn's laws. The bottle reappeared, and between them they disposed of its contents. The man carefully put the empty bottle away.

Then they sat down on the big stringer that boxed in the cinder platform, and the stranger told Holland about the woeful conditions that prevailed in that neighborhood at the time.

FIRST of all he told the big man that a strike of the quarrymen was in progress in that section and that, as nothing but stone came out of that region and everything depended upon the quarries, things were at a standstill. The railroad, so it appeared, controlled a majority of the stock of the company operating the quarries thereabouts and it was greedily holding out against the strikers' demands for better wages.

He said that conditions in the district were terrible, with people starving to death every day. One striker's family had lost four members and another had lost two. There were bound to be many other deaths, the man told Holland, because dozens of children and old women were down in bed, sick.

"An' all dyin' because they ain't got nothin' to put in their bellies," the man said, emphasizing his statement with many oaths. "The railroad owns the stores here at Becks an' they won't give us credit."

It was a ghastly tale and Holland, the cockles of his heart warmed by the liquor given him and ready to believe anything about the railroad, was inclined to shed tears of sympathy then and there. How could he know that the railroad company did not own a single share of stock in anything but its own tracks and equipment? And how could he know that the families of the ignorant quarrymen in that district were subject to a chronic hungriness whether their heads worked full time or not at all?

He was therefore morbidly and revengefully interested in the stranger's story of the sheer brutality of the railroad company, and every now and then he interjected a condemnatory oath of his own. He condemned the L. P. & S. from terminal to terminal, it and all its officials, and Bucks Hartley more than any. It was plain that Hartley was a savage at heart and no form of death was too violent for him. Holland was bitter against Bucks Hartley.

The overalled one became enamored of his subject and threw caution to the winds.

"But we'll fix 'em!" he said hotly. "We'll bust 'em wide open before we're through with 'em. We've been worryin' 'em a good deal just to let 'em know we ain't gone to sleep, but what we've done ain't nothin' to

what we're goin' to do if they don't give in in a tarnation hurry. We'll show 'em!"

"What have you been doing?" asked Holland.

"Oh, takin' out a rail on the freight branch here now an' then an' droppin' one of their trains in the ditch," replied the other. "We've gone over to the main line a few times an' rocked their passenger-trains. I reckon they've got a string of damage suits as long as your arm from their passengers. We've burned a few depots an' some cars standin' on a sidin'. We ain't been asleep, pardner."

He laughed gleefully at thought of the damage that had been inflicted upon the railroad company.

Holland said—

"Don't they try to stop you?"

"Sure they do, but as fast as they send their special agents down here we drive 'em out again. There ain't no man fool enough to risk his life for the money them special agents get. The sheriff in this county is friendly to the boys, so we don't pay him no attention."

"Killed anybody yet?"

"Not yet, but we will if they don't clear out an' leave us alone."

Holland's gaze fell upon the water-tank.

"Seems to me you fellows would have knocked that tank down," he said.

"An' we would if a woman an' three kids wasn't dependin' on it for the bread they eat," the stranger answered. "The water is pumped into the tank by a gas engine over behind the hill in one of the old quarries. This woman's husband, Sim Eggers, was a quarryman an' he got killed a year or so ago by a big rock fallin' on him. The boys got the railroad to give the pumpin' job to his woman. The tank don't amount to much, nohow; if we throwed it down the engines could water at Harrodsburg, eight miles south."

"How about the depot there?"

The man's lips curled scornfully.

"We ain't foolin' with little fish like that. We chased the operator out three weeks ago, so the company locked the depot an' she's been locked ever since. No sense in burnin' it down; we only want to do things that hurt 'em."

"I see," said Holland. "So you're going to pull off something big that will make them sit up and take notice?"

"We calculate that way, pardner. We sent 'em a letter up to Gordonsburg the other day, the committee did, tellin' 'em if they didn't give in by noon Thursday—that's today—they'd hear from us in a way they don't like."

"What are you going to do?"

"It ain't settled yet, but it'll be somethin' big, you bet."

"Darned if I don't wish I could have a hand in it," Holland said regretfully.

"Ain't nothin' to keep you from it," came the quick reply.

"Put my name down then."

The other man looked at Holland narrowly for several moments before replying.

"Pardner, you ain't tryin' to string me?" he said eventually.

"What do you mean, stringing you?"

"The reason I'm here this early in the mornin' is to keep watch on the trains that go by to see who gets off an' find out what they want," said the other. "We've got watchers at ever' station in this neck of the woods. How do I know you ain't somebody sent here by the railroad to spy on us?"

"Well, if you put it that way," replied Holland, "you don't know, but I guess if you feel that way about it the best thing I can do is toddle along and mind my own business. You won't have any objections to me sticking around here until the text freight-train stops for water?"

"Hold on, pardner," said the stranger quickly. "You needn't be in such a tarnation hurry to get sore; we got to be sure about folks, you know, or first thing we know some of us'll be doin' time in the pen. You come along with me an' I'll fix you up till tonight; then I'll take you to the committee an' see about it. But I want to tell you something for your own good, pardner," he said warningly. "If you're cappin' for the railroad you'd better take a long walk and not come back no more. You know what I mean?"

"Lead on, mister," was Holland's brief reply.

WITHOUT another word the stranger led the way down the platform until they came to a path leading off at a right angle, and this they took and headed into the woods. They wended their silent way through a narrow cut between two rock-faced bluffs and at length, about a mile from where they had started, they rounded the shoulder of a hill and came out

abruptly into the main and only street of a town which, as Holland concluded after a quick estimate, was composed of about forty dwellings and other structures.

It was one of those squalid, half finished towns common to mining districts and presented no feature that might have appealed to one accustomed to beauty and refinement. A cutting was in process in the side of the hill under which the town nestled and on the opposite side of the town were deep pits from which much stone had already been quarried. Numerous skeleton derricks thrust their heads above the rims of these pits, while in their bottoms small donkey-engines stood silent. A number of flat-cars loaded with stone and some unloaded stood on various spurs. Holland knew such places well.

With the exception of the two men the street was deserted. Not a sound but the crunching of their footsteps on the crushed-stone sidewalk broke the silence. Holland's guide at length pushed open the broken front gate of a dilapidated residence about half-way down the street, and they passed through and walked around to a side door. They went in without knocking, and Holland found himself in what logically was a living-room, but which was now encumbered with floor-beds, the pillows of which were supporting the frowsy heads of half a dozen children. One of them looked at Holland sleepily.

"My brood," the stranger explained. "Them's the kind the railroad is tryin' to starve, though I'm lucky to have enough to keep 'em goin' yet a while."

They passed on out into a kitchen littered with everything from stove wood scattered about the floor to a jumble of greasy dishes on a dirty table. A woman, bare of feet and with coarse hair streaming down over her face, stood before a battered stove, her cheeks puffed, trying to fan to life a pile of splinters in the fire-box. She looked up when the two men entered.

"Mag, get somethin' to eat on the table as soon as you can," instructed the man. "My old woman," he added for Holland's benefit. "Come over here an' wash up if you want to."

He directed Holland to a bucket of water standing on a stool in one corner. Holland needed no second invitation, for, though he had descended to a low scale of living, he made brave attempts to keep himself as clean as possible. Besides, he could feel the grit of the cinders his face had plowed up from the depot-platform and imagined he presented a murderous appearance before the woman.

His host left the room and went out into the back yard. During Holland's ablutions he could feel the woman's gaze on his back. It made him feel uncomfortable and he suddenly turned to find her staring at him with suspicious eyes. He half smiled at her but her harsh face did not change expression.

"Who are you?" she demanded without preliminaries.

"Bill Holland, ma'am—a man out of luck who got thrown off a freight-train here a little while ago. Your husband picked me up and was kind enough to bring me here. I don't like the railroad company any more than you do, so don't get the idea in your head that I am a railroad detective."

He thought it just as well to be perfectly frank with the woman right off and try to allay any suspicions and fear of him she entertained. She said nothing in reply and turned to her work again, but Holland could readily see that she was not satisfied.

He was too hungry and too thankful for the meal to take any notice of the accompanying filth when he and his host sat down to breakfast half an hour later. Breakfast over, the two men repaired to the parlor, where they turned in and slept all morning. They got up and ate dinner, then spent the afternoon playing seven-up with a pack of greasy cards. From some mysterious fount Sam Hagin, which Holland had learned was his host's name, kept a supply of liquor at hand. Holland was not lax in his attentions toward the bottle and drank his share. The first liquor he had drunk in Gordonsburg after nearly two months of fotal abstinence had gone hard with him, but with that first touch his old callousness to its effects returned to him and he drank the afternoon through without disaster.

"Well, pardner, let's go to committee," Hagin said about ten o'clock that night.

They put away the cards and set out. The committee met in a deserted tool-house about a quarter of a mile from the town over among a network of pits where a false step meant a fractured limb, if not death, to the unfortunate falling into them after dark. The night encompassed them like the folds of a velvet shroud, and how Hagin managed to find his way through the mass without

pause was more than Holland could figure out. The tool-house was without windows and no light showed from it to guide them.

They came at last to a squat building and Hagin gave a series of peculiar raps on the door with his knuckles, which were answered in kind by some one inside. They were admitted, and the door was closed and bolted behind them.

A smoking oil-lamp stood on a long table in the center of the room, and by its uncertain light Holland saw seven men seated about the table smoking pipes. He noted with some disconcertment that each and every one of the men looked at him with amazement and not a little suspicion.

"Who you got there, Sam?" a bewhiskered man near the head of the table asked sharply.

"A recruit who wants a hand in the deal," replied Hagin. "I'll be responsible for this party, boys, so just keep your traps shut. If you've got anything to say, Jim, go ahead," he spoke belligerently to one of the men.

"I reckon you know what you're a-doin'," responded the man Jim.

"I sure do, so we'll let 'er go at that. Take a chair over there, Bill," Hagin addressed Holland.

HOLLAND obeyed, wondering. It would seem that he had accidentally stumbled upon the king-pin himself that morning, and as the evening wore on that proved to be the fact. Hagin did the dictating and the others acquiesced. He seated himself in the vacant chair at the head of the table.

"All here?" he said, letting his gaze leap from face to face. "All here. Then let's have a drink."

Numerous bottles of whisky were pulled from pockets and passed around. One man got up and brought a gallon jug of liquor to the table. Round and round circled the bottles, emptied in no time only to be refilled from the jug.

"Well, let's get down to business," said Hagin finally, wiping his mouth on the back of his hand. "Andy, did you go over to Smithville today like I told you?"

Andy, a lank person with an evil face, sitting next to Holland, pulled a dirty envelope from his pocket and skidded it across the table to Hagin. Hagin ripped the envelope open and laboriously read the contents of the single sheet of paper he extracted. He presently looked up with a frown.

"Here she is, boys—letter from Hartley," he said.

"Read it," "What's he say?" "Anything doin'?" "Read the news," and other exclamations were shot at Hagin from all sides.

"It's short an' quick," replied Hagin. "He says the railroad ain't responsible for conditions up this way."

"He's a liar!" interrupted one of the men.

"Who owns the quarries if the railroad don't?" queried another savagely.

"He says if we're lookin' for trouble we can get all we want," went on Hagin. "He says if we want the State militia on our heads, to go ahead. Last of all he says we can plain go to ——."

The expressions of hope that had mounted to the faces of his auditors when Hagin announced the writer of the letter had changed to expressions of savage hatred by the time he had finished.

"All right, we'll go to ——, but we'll take few houn's like Hartley with us when we go!" spoke the man called Jim.

"Ain't no use writin' ag'in," vouchsafed a dark-visaged man at Hagin's left.

"Don't fool with 'em no longer, Sam," advised another.

"Burn Clear Creek bridge," was Andy's suggestion.

"Shut up!" ordered Hagin. "Now you boys listen to me. I've got a plan that'll bring 'em to their feet in a tarnation hurry."

"Let's have it," came the chorus when Hagin paused for a drink.

"We'll shoot our first wad at No. 4," Hagin said, referring to the night north-bound passenger-train.

"Good! Put her in the ditch!" chortled some one.

"Worse'n that," said Hagin grimly. "We'll smash her to kindlin'-wood!"

Holland flashed a glance at the faces about him. Hagin's cold-blooded proposal brought a tightening of their lips, and there was an almost imperceptible movement among them as of men holding their breath. Stealthy glances were exchanged.

"You don't aim to kill nobody, Sam," half questioned Jim, breaking the silence that had followed Hagin's announcement.

"It won't be our fault if somebody gets killed, will it?" demanded Hagin defensively.

"It's murder, that's what I call it," remarked the dark-visaged one.

Hagin's eyes blazed.

"Are you a lot of weak-kneed babies, or men?" he thundered. "You've been howlin' your heads off to do somethin' an' now when I tell you what to do, you start crawfishin' like a lot of cowards. You fellers make me sick!"

"But we didn't figger to carry it that far, Sam," whined Andy.

"We'll go all the way this time or we'll quit right here and now," was Hagin's decisive reply. "Let me ask you somethin', Andy, an' all the rest of you for the matter of that. Who's goin' to feed you an' your women an' your kids when your money's all gone an' there ain't no more left in the strikers' fund? You reckon the railroad's goin' to send a man down here with a pocketful of money an' say, 'Here, boys, we don't want to see you starve, so here's some money to buy grub?' Think they're goin' to do that? You'll wait till —— freezes over. If you want anything from the railroad you've got to make 'em give it to you, an' the only way to do that is go after 'em a-plenty.

"We've tried a good many ways to bring 'em to terms," he continued after refreshing himself at one of the bottles, "but it ain't done much good. We've been too easy. We're liable to fiddle along this way all Summer if we don't get busy. Of course we ain't figgerin' on killin' nobody, but them that's on No. 4 when she gets smashed will be out of luck for bein' on her just then, that's all.

"We didn't tell them to be there. People ain't got no business ridin' on the trains of that kind of a railroad company, nohow, an' so doin' they make themselves bad as the railroad. We don't owe 'em nothin' far's I can see, an' we ain't got no call to worry about what happens to 'em. If you'd rather let yourselves an' your women an' kids starve to death because you ain't got the guts to fight for 'em, that's your business. But I'm tellin' you right now if you turn my proposition down, you can all go to ——!"

"You're right, Sam," agreed the dark-visaged man.

There followed a general wise nodding of heads and a chorus of "That's right," and "That's a fact," and "Somethin' in what Sam says," from the audience. Hagin's arguments had had their effect, crude and false though they were.

These men, Holland knew, were reasoning in primitive terms. Something was threatening their stomachs and to threaten primitive man's stomach is equivalent to threatening to take his life. Hagin had sowed his seed in fertile ground, as Holland saw from the changed expressions on the faces of the men.

As for himself, the proposal deliberately to wreck a train filled with innocent passengers, thereby jeopardizing the life of every man, woman and child who chanced to be on that train, was revolting in the extreme. He had bargained for nothing like that and he inwardly shrank from contact with men who would wilfully meditate such a murderous act as suggested by the fiend Hagin.

An irresistible force compelled him to turn his head, and in a dark corner of the room he visioned three death's heads grinning at him from the thick veil of tobacco smoke that hung there. The words of Bucks Hartley came back to him—

"You've got blood on your hands, Holland."

He shrank still farther and shot a swift glance at his hands. True, they were free of any physical stain of red, but for all that Holland knew that they were stained morally with the blood of two firemen and an engineer whom his negligence had put to death. And it seemed to him that in his ears rang the concerted cries of those on No. 4 to add nothing more to that stain.

His thoughts in a panic, he clutched at one of the bottles of whisky standing near at hand and, lifting it to his lips with a nervous hand, he drained it to the last drop. The man sitting beside him looked at him with astonishemnt.

"Pardner, you're a reg'lar hog for licker, ain't you?" the man grinned at him.

Holland said nothing and set the empty bottle back on the table. He discovered that Hagin had been talking during his absorbing reverie and that he had missed the greater part of what had been said. In fact, he came in on the tail end of Hagin's instructions to his mates and heard that gentleman conclude with:

"Ed, you an' Jim, Tom, Hank, Bob an' Turner get the car out of number two quarry. Me an' Bill, there, will look after the switch down at the end of the spur. You boys better hustle now, because No. 4's due at Harrodsburg in about an hour, an' we ain't got no time to fool away."

THE clatter of chairs and the shuffling of heavy shoes on the creaking floor boards followed. There was a snatching of drinks from the bottles; then they all trooped out into the night, two groups forming at the door and moving off in different directions. Holland found himself tagging along a rocky path at the heels of Hagin, Andy bringing up the rear. He was not fully aware of the plan and desired enlightenment.

"I guess you'll have to wise me up a bit, Hagin," he ventured, pushing up beside the leader when the nature of the path permitted. "I'm not acquainted with this country like you fellows, you know."

"It's plain as day," answered Hagin. "You see, Billy, Becks ain't on the main line. The main line runs down from Smithville over the hill to Harrodsburg, twelve mile. What we call the West Branch, which Becks is on, comes off the main line at Smithville an' connects again at Harrodsburg. The West Branch is twenty-two mile long an' Becks is eight mile from Harrodsburg.

"You see, when the railroad put more tonnage on their freights they couldn't pull Smithville hill, so they built the West Branch around through the bottoms past the hill and cut out the steep grades so the freights could climb up without doublin', y'understand?"

"Not quite, I confess. Where does the car come in?"

"—— it, man, there ain't nothin' to it," Hagin said gruffly. "You see, Ed an' his crowd is goin' to bring a loaded car of stone down the spur out of No. 2 quarry to the main line of the West Branch—just a little below the depot where I saw you this mornin'.

"It's all down-grade from here to Harrodsburg, an' she ain't no slouch of a grade neither. When we give that car a start we ought to work up a speed of thirty mile an hour, anyhow. No. 4 is generally on time, an' I figger she ought to meet that car of stone a little below Harrodsburg, if we send it off on time. You know what it means when a train comin' north about forty mile an hour meets a car of stone goin' south about thirty mile an hour. Bingo! I reckon that'll wake old Hartley up tarnation quick.

Hagin chuckled softly to himself.

"Good God!" ejaculated Holland.

He felt the other man's eyes boring through him in the darkness.

"Gettin' cold feet?" taunted Hagin.

"No—no," disclaimed Holland quickly.

"This ain't no time to be gettin' sick, Bill," said the other eloquently.

Holland knew that very well, and knew that he would have trouble on his hands if he showed any signs of weakening. Had he so desired, he could have throttled Hagin and his companion with comparative ease, but that would not serve to call a halt to the devilish plot to wreck No. 4. The others would be left to carry the work forward. Holland had seen enough before they left the tool-house to know that nothing would stop the men now.

But Holland was not at all certain in his mind what he purposed doing about it, other than that if he found a means for frustrating the game he would do so. To run meant that he would save himself, but that course would be cowardly; it would be the same as running away from the hundred or more innocent people who might at that very moment be rushing north on No. 4. In that case he, as well as the others would be guilty of murder.

Bucks Hartley's words—"You've got blood on your hands!"—kept recurring to him as he trudged at the heels of Hagin. Also every now and then he imagined he saw the three death's heads staring at him from a darker clump of bush or the lighter face of a rock.

The three men came to the track. A locomotive whistle screeched at them, and a glaring headlight swept over them and pointed the way south for a long train of cars that flowed and thundered by and was soon stilled by the distance.

"There you are, Bill; you can see how fast they coast down the grade," cried Hagin exultantly. "Let's get that spur switch open so Ed an' his men can get the car out."

The passing of the freight-train had been an object lesson to Holland. It left him in a cold sweat and augmented the horror that had taken possession of him.

"Got a switch key, Andy?" from Hagin.

"No."

Hagin cursed.

"Whyn't we bring along a pinch-bar?" he snarled. "Scatter out an' see if you can find a fish-plate or somethin' to knock the lock off that switch," he directed.

They separated, immediately losing each other in the darkness. Holland flung himself flat on his stomach to secure a better

perspective and swiftly searched the ground. The depot loomed a dark shadow not a hundred yards distant. He got up and ran toward it lightly. His groping hand fell upon the padlock on the door. He could have shouted with joy, for the lock was one of those inadequate affairs that give notice rather than security. He gave a twist of his powerful fingers and the lock came off in his hand.

In a moment he was inside the musty-smelling office and feeling nervously along the walls for the switchboard and the telegraph table.

"——! I hope they haven't dead-ended the wires!" he muttered.

His hands came in contact with the table and the switchboard on the wall above it simultaneously. He was feverish with excitement as he felt over the face of the board. He found two wires at the top and two at the side of the board, and a moment later one hand lighted on a single set of instruments on the table.

"Thank God!" he cried whisperingly.

He felt for the cut-out plugs at the top of the board, removed them and inserted them in their proper holes to cut in on the circuit. It was a one-wire station, as the switchboard told him, and he fervently prayed that the wire connected with the dispatcher's table at Gordonsburg. His hands shook with excitement as he worked.

The telegraph sounder began to clatter noisily and he swooped down upon it with a curse. There must be no noise whatever if he wished to avoid the chance of discovery by the men outside. He turned down the adjustment screws on both the relay and sounder and silenced the instruments altogether; then he did the same for the key until its play was almost negligible. He threw the key switch and opened the circuit.

"D S, D S, D S," he began to call, that being the signal almost universally assigned to the dispatcher. The instruments being silenced, there was no way of his knowing whether his call was heard, therefore, after repeating the call a dozen or more times, he began his message, wondering vaguely whether it would ever reach it destination.

"This is Bill Holland at Becks," he ticked off on the key. "Strikers here going to let car of stone drop down-grade on No. 4 at Harrodsburg. Stop No. 4 south of Harrodsburg as soon as possible and send out pilot engine."

HE REPEATED the message twice, abbreviating the words in order to gain time, then closed the key switch. He had just finished cutting out the instruments on the switchboard when the sudden flare of a match threw the office into a glare of light. Holland wheeled from the board to find Andy looking at him with sneering eyes.

"I thought so, —— you!" snarled Andy and made a motion with one hand toward his hip pocket.

The match went out. With the bound of a tiger Holland covered the intervening distance and by a lucky grab caught Andy by the throat and choked off a warning cry. He sent his hard fist smashing against the man's temple and Andy wilted. Holland quickly lowered the unconscious form to the floor and made his exit, closing the door behind him. He followed the track and at length came to where Hagin was pounding at the switch lock with a heavy bar of iron. In a moment the lock flew off.

"That you, Andy?" said Hagin, throwing the switch.

"No, it's Holland," answered the big man.

"Where's Andy?"

"I don't know," lied Holland.

"Who lit that match in the depot a bit ago?"

"I did," lied Holland again.

He was getting nervous. Something told him that Hagin was growing suspicious. Just how it might have turned out was never settled, for, before Hagin could say anything further, the car of stone came whining over the rusty rails of the spur track, six men pushing it, and came to rest on the main track beyond the switch. Hagin threw the switch back and one of the men chocked the car by thrusting a pinch-bar under the front wheels. Holland looked at the car. It was a flat-car and resting upon it were half a dozen or more big blocks of stone, the smallest of which, standing on the south end of the car, weighed not less than a ton.

Holland shivered.

In the interval of getting the car ready Hagin seemed to have forgotten about Andy and did not renew his questioning, for which Holland was thankful. The leader struck a match and looked at the cheap watch he pulled from his pocket.

"One-twenty," he announced, throwing the match away. "No. 4 is due at Harrodsburg at one-fifty-five. I figgered it all

out yesterday an' calculate it will take the car twenty minutes to roll down past Harrodsburg, so we'll push her off at one-thirty-five. We've got a fifteen-minute wait. Who's got a bottle of licker?"

Several bottles were produced and the liquor went the rounds. Holland took a stiff drink to steady his nerves, then sat down on the end of a cross-tie. Still Hagin did not mention Andy again, but for the most part busied himself lighting matches at intervals to look at his watch.

Not yet had the big man settled in his mind what he intended to do. He wondered if he had done all that was possible for him to do. He was not satisfied. Had his message been received? What steps would be taken to hold No. 4?

The former question worried him more than the latter, for if his message had not been received naturally nothing would be done tohold the passenger-train.

An enforced silence had compelled him to cut out his instruments; thus he got no answer to his message. He had misgivings. He considered the advisability of making his way back to the depot some way or another, cutting in again and repeating his message, this time adjusting the instruments so they would be heard. But that course was denied him by the fact that Hagin would question his leaving the group when there was no occasion for leaving. He concluded that he could not afford to take the chance. Something else might turn up.

All in all, he reflected that he had got himself into a dirty mess by a temporary anger against Bucks Hartley and the brakeman who had thrown him off the train at Becks. He heartily wished himself out of it, yet with the next breath was glad he was there. What about the passengers on No 4? They were to be considered, if he was to add nothing to the stain on his hands.

"Hey, what's the matter, pard, goin' to sleep on the job?" rasped the man next to whom he sat.

Holland straightened up. He realized that he had shrunk from the three death's heads out here in the darkness, and cursed himself softly for a fool.

"Time's up!" snapped Hagin abruptly after striking a match and looking at his watch. "On your feet, men! Take your chock out, Ed. Lay hold, all, an' let 'er run! Now you take 'er!"

The men were on their feet almost at once, Holland with them. He was pushing at the car with the others, Hagin by his side, puffing and blowing with the exertion of it. Ed pinched the car forward with his bar and gave it a start, and the grade was such that it gained momentum with each foot.

"Let go!" yelled Hagin finally when the car was going at a good clip.

The car was free, already gliding swiftly toward its work of death and destruction.

"You've got blood on your hands!" cried a voice from somewhere into Holland's ear.

Then the big man knew his mission. It came to him clearly and in a flash. With a bound he went into the air and landed hands and knees on the car beside one of the blocks of stone. A voice screamed behind him.

"Kill Holland! Kill Holland! He's a railroad spy!"

Holland recognized the voice of Andy, the man whom he had struck unconscious. He savagely regretted that he had not killed him when he struck. A storm of curses was accompanied by a fusillade of pistol shots. Bullets whistled by Holland's head, and he ducked in behind one of the blocks of stone. He heard footsteps running along the track behind the car, but they were outdistanced and soon died away.

WHEN the big man thought it safe to do so, he got to his feet and felt for the hand brake of the car. He found it at once, but instead of setting it a little to check the momentum of the car he let the car run unbridled as it was. He was not yet safely out of enemy country and decided to take no chances. It was quite possible that the train wreckers he had left behind him, intent on killing him for the trick he had played on them, would give chase on a hand-car, though he had seen no such conveyance back there.

He began counting off the seconds as best he could, for he had pawned his watch long ago, calculating that when he had counted to one thousand the car would have run far enough to risk braking it to a stop without danger of interference from the gang behind, yet to stop well clear of the main line and the path of No. 4. In the event that his warning message had not been received, No. 4 would get safely by at any rate. The lives of too many innocent people were at stake to take any chances.

"Four hundred nineteen," went his incessant counting of the seconds.

So the car went roaring down the grade unchecked, swaying and jumping like a thing with life, gaining speed with each turn of the wheels until the cool night air whistled past the big man's ears like a gale of wind. Several times the car seemed to leave the rails altogether. Holland could almost swear he was flying through the air and held his breath anxiously.

"Seven hundred fifty-three," he counted.

The car tipped over a slightly steeper grade and shot downward through the darkness like the shell from a high-power gun and giving off a roaring sound somewhat similar. It darted around a sharp curve and Holland could have sworn that it rode on the four wheels of one side.

"Eight hundred ninty-nine."

The car roared across a trestle and the noise that smote the big man's ears was tremendous. He swayed like a drunken man and held on to the brake-wheel for life. His hat was whipped from his head as if by an invisible hand, and the tails of his coat streamed and fluttered in the wind.

"One thousand!"

He rose. Steadying himself against the block of stone upon which he had been sitting, he grasped the brake-wheel firmly with both hands. He took up the slack of the chain and rods, then began to heave, swinging his body half around with each heave to get the added advantage of his weight against the wheel. He held what he gained by pressing one of his toes against the "dog" at the base of the brake-staff.

At last the wheel would turn no farther; it was set as tightly as the big man could set it, but there had been no perceptible slackening of the car's pace; in fact its pace seemed to have increased somewhat since the brake had been set. Holland imagined so, at least. He had ridden too many freight-cars not to know what the trouble was. The brake-rods under the car were jammed somewhere and the brake was practically useless. He had not considered that possibility. His consternation was augmented when the brake-chain suddenly snapped and the brake-wheel spun around like a top.

Holland stood dumb, and while he watched the brake-wheel spinning, the car suddenly shot out on a plain-like stretch of country, rounding a wide curve as it did so. His vision was unobstructed for at least three miles. The silver disk of a headlight showed far across the way, and the wail of a locomotive whistle penetrated the roar of the flying car and came to his ears.

"My God!" he gasped.

Instantly, scarcely without thought, big Bill Holland, drunkard and general no-account, sprang forward along the car beside the huge blocks of stone.

"You've got blood on your hands!" shrieked the whistle of the near-coming passenger train, blowing for Harrodsburg.

Holland crouched low behind the smallest block of stone standing on the forward end of the car, and bracing his feet against the stone behind him, he gave a mighty heave of his big shoulders and the block toppled from the car, falling directly in the center of the tracks. The next moment the car seemed to leap into the air and turn end over end, before it crashed to the earth.

No. 4 went hurtling by on the main track, not a hundred yards away, for the run up Smithville hill.

WHEN Bill Holland was next conscious of his whereabouts, he found himself lying on a cot in what plainly was a hospital ward. A white-robed nurse stood at one side of the cot; Bucks Hartley sat in a chair on the opposite side, an anxious look on his face. Holland glanced wonderingly at these two, then dropped his eyes to the coverlet that hid his legs. By the feel of his legs he knew that something was wrong.

"Both of them off just above the knees, old man," said the superintendent gently, noting the puzzled expression on Holland's face.

The big man said nothing but blinked his eyes rapidly and looked off through an open window near at hand.

"The company will look out for you, Holland," Hartley said reassuringly. "You've earned your place."

"Tell me about it," the big man requested wearily.

The superintendent sent a glance at the nurse, and she nodded.

"The agent at Harrodsburg heard the crash and came out to see what it was," said Hartley. "He found you unconscious with both your legs under a block of stone. It's a miracle that you came through alive."

"No. 4?"

"Due to you, she got by without a scratch."

"I tried to get word to you from Becks, Mr. Hartley, but——"

"That's all right, old man," interrupted the superintendent. "I've got a pretty clear idea of all you did, so you can wait till you feel better to tell me about it. For some reason or other the strikers down at Becks all went back to work this morning.

"We got your message at Gordonsburg, all right, but we couldn't do anything to stop No. 4. She had already left Bedford, the last open station south of Smithville, because Harrodsburg closes at seven o'clock. It was —— waiting to get word about that car of stone smashing into No. 4, and I guess I shed a few tears when Harrodsburg wired about things down there.

"I ordered out an engine and my car, got a couple of doctors and hurried down. We brought you up here to Gordonsburg and operated. You're good for life with me and the L. P. & S. people, old man, so don't let that worry you. Delaney quits and we'll start you there."

"Thank you, sir," said Holland in a tired voice.

"Time's up, Mr. Hartley," broke in the nurse.

Hartley caught one of Holland's hands and squeezed it.

"You redeemed yourself with a vengeance, old fellow," he said.

Holland looked after the superintendent as he left the ward, then closed his eyes with a contented expression on his wan face.

Pirate Proas

By GORDON MALHERBE HILLMAN

SWINGING down the China Sea, when the Eastern trade-winds blow,
With colored lights like dancing flames, the Malay proas go—
Up and down the shadowy waves that fringe the coral shore,
Past the rocks of beachless isles, where heavy combers roar.

Lean and black in the light of dawn, they skim the smoky sea,
To race the junks from river-ports, laden with new-picked tea,
Wallowing down the dim brown shores with clumsy spars and sails,
Standing in to shallow bays, away from the shifting gales.

Bright spots against the bulwarks, their sailors watch the sky
And finger rusty muskets as the proas venture by
With dusky pirates at the oars and rich loot piled astern,
Plunging north from a yellow blaze where the gutted vessels burn.

Erased

By S. B. H. Hurst

Author of "The Brightest Jewel of Them All," "An Angel With a Tiger's Soul," etc.

THE Prussian glared haughtily at the unmoved old rug-seller and spoke raspingly in Hindustani:

"The English won't ride you much longer. You will soon be free of their dominion."

He raised the ends of his moustache nearly to the perpendicular, thinking of the time when a black man would not dare remain seated in the presence of an officer of the All Highest. It was January, 1914.

The rug-seller stroked his beard in his exasperating way, watching the smoke of his hubble-bubble curling like incense through the scented water, and said—

"So I have heard, so my father heard—and his father before him."

"*Um jute waller na hai, toom*——"

The rug-seller raised a dignified and silencing hand. To be addressed as *toom* (thou), as if he were an inferior, by this red-faced animal was an insult to which he was not accustomed.

"I did not *call* you a liar," he replied in English, "so why tell me you are not one?"

"You spoke about your father and——"

"And you said you were not a liar."

The old man would not have dreamed of interrupting an Englishman this way, but the German missed the implied insult.

"Ah, but you do not believe we shall do it, eh?"

"I believe only in one god," murmured the old man cryptically.

"But I am not talking of religion."

Again the inference had escaped the dense von Phul.

"I am an old man and understand but little. What can I do in my weakness to be of use to one so powerful—to be of consequence, of assistance to the officer of so great a king?"

The German swelled like a pouter pigeon, while the old man found some difficulty in hiding his amusement in his great beard.

"In many ways. We do not desire to make ourselves too conspicuous—not yet—so we want men like you to influence your people to come over to our side. We have much money."

"But why does Germany wish to possess India?"

"To release the people from the heel of the grinding British. Would you not be free?"

The old man waved an expressive arm.

"My father owned this shop. I have done business here for nearly sixty years—unmolested. My religion is preserved to me. If a Christian missionary insults my belief I may have him arrested. The British protect me."

The German sneered and, for a moment, his conceit broke through his diplomacy.

"The dirty English will not be able to protect you much longer. Germany will very soon conquer India, and then God help our enemies both white and black."

There are few worse insults than to call

a high caste native a black man, but the rug-seller did not apparently notice the words. He bowed submissively.

"What are your commands, O protector of the poor?" he whined.

The commands were many, ample and coordinated. That is, they were beautifully dovetailed into a plan of apparently wonderful efficiency, but they carried the inevitable weakness of all German reasoning—a blind faith in an erroneous assumption and an indifference to the most important principle of logic—that every repetition of the postulate vitiates the argument. Otherwise the plan was all right.

The proselyting and arranging of the whole was but a part of the business assigned to von Phul. From among all the Germans in India he had been specially chosen for a special duty. Time and again the system of spies working the Kaiser's will through India had bumped into an exceedingly baffling obstacle. Clever individuals, who did not dream they were suspected, had been plucked out of their appointed spheres as unerringly as an onion from among roses and, conveyed by strange natives who were obviously working under some unseen Englishman, were taken to inhospitable frontiers—always without any one in authority being sufficiently involved to make a legal or international outcry possible.

It was von Phul's business to find out who was at the head of this secret service, for the German Foreign Office was satisfied that the British government was not responsible. That any private individual—any one not connected with the government—should dare to act in this way was incomprehensible to the Teutonic mind, but the facts proved that such was the case.

Who was this civilian Englishman who rendered impotent the best efforts of the best German spies? Hard and long von Phul worked on this problem, but so far he had not met with the success which he felt his energy and talent warranted. There had come to him, however, one little clue—the voice of a garrulous and intoxicated police official—which hinted at non-official hands having broken up certain native criminal societies. Was it the same hand? Was the hand that plucked the Germans from their vineyards the hand that had upset the criminals?

By roundabout ways it had come to von Phul that a very rich rug-seller had lost money because of the breaking up of the criminal society in which he was a sort of director. This rug-seller was listed as having great influence with his coreligionists. Choosing a sweltering afternoon, von Phul had visited him for the first time. Now, his commands given, he began to fish warily for something leading up to his own particular problem.

Did the English, whom they both hated, have a sort of secret police—its headquarters in Calcutta—not connected with the government?

The rug-seller grinned. Here, he felt, was a chance to lead this water-buffalo astray. He would enjoy himself. Besides, if he could get the German to believe that the mysterious organization which had caused him to lose money in criminal enterprise was also engaged in hunting Germans, there was a chance—a slim chance, he granted—of the Germans putting the mysterious organization out of business. If this happened he might be able to get his money back. At any rate, the mystery would be dissipated, which would be a relief, for the rug-seller had never been able to understand why he had remained immune from arrest, and the shadow of possibility sometimes occasioned loss of sleep. Of course, the thief-catcher was not interested in Germans, but that did not matter.

Yes, there was a secret police with which the rug-seller had often come in contact.

This was excellent. It was the first definite admission von Phul had obtained from either English or native—the words of the drunken policeman being almost meaningless. Visions of the Order of the Black Eagle stimulated him. He asked for further details.

The seller of rugs drew inspiration from his water-pipe, his eyes fixed on the moving stream of life in the narrow lane outside his shop, just across the barrier of heaped-up rugs.

THE afternoon was ending and the first cool breath of evening called Calcutta to its cooking-pots. The air was beginning to fill with the odor of dung fires, and the long-drawn cries of hawkers reached the ear with a clarity indicating that fewer feet were tramping the dust. Presently there would come a pause as near to a silence as that part of the city could know, when only the chatter of mouths

filled with rice and curry would be heard.

The rug-seller talked on, his fiction of a wonderful fullness, to a delighted audience of one. The hand that had disintegrated the criminal society was the hand so dangerous to German spies. But the curious part about it all was that the rug-seller was telling the truth, while firmly believing he was lying.

An abnormally fat babu (native gentleman) paused on the other side of the rug-barrier, poking a manicured finger into a luxurious weave of camels' hair. The soothing language of the rug-seller came to a full stop.

"Get you out of here," rasped the German, trying to terrify the babu with his frown. "Don't you see we're busy?"

The owner of the shop stiffened. The German had made the awful error of snatching at a dog's pet bone, yet the voice of the old man did not betray his anger.

"Is that the way Germany will protect my trade?" he asked softly.

The babu did not appear to have heard either the Mohammedan or the German. Before von Phul could answer, he spoke in English.

"What is the price of this poor piece of work?"

It was well done, that question. In the wrath which rose to his depreciation of the rug, the other quarrel was momentarily forgotten. The babu's interest in rugs was merely assumed. He was interested in something else. Now, if he could avoid suspicion, he might learn something. If the knowledge thus gained developed properly, he would win fifty rupees. That fifty would of course be useful to his mythical family—of whom he so often talked and for whom he so often begged—but the winning of it would bring greater pleasure to his soul because his doing so would prevent its finding its way into the turban of a certain Sikh with whom he was great friends.

"You see," had said the babu's master, one Sinclair, "we know, of course, that there are many Germans here, but we don't know which we want. It is a trick of theirs to send about fifty men in addition to the active one—to try to draw our attention from the right one with a lot of men who pretend to be active. To bother with them all would be as foolish as it would be to arrest them all and you know the stupidity of that, even if we could find an excuse for its being done.

"Now, knowing the habits of the animals, they have reasoned their way to me—to the unofficial obstacle which interferes with their spying. Consequently they will try to remove that obstacle—remove me, get me out of the way. Now, since my existence is thought to be a myth by many, and my place of residence—that is, my residence in my right character—is known only to the viceroy, two servants, Sesson sahib, my Sikh and yourself—all of whom I trust as I do myself—it follows that the Germans will have trouble finding me, but they are a persevering people and, besides, their orders about me will be imperative.

"Employing criminals, as they do, they must have heard of the workings of a mysterious, unofficial sort of police. Thus they will assume that the unofficial organization which has caused so many criminals great sorrow is, also, the organization which so mysteriously upsets the plan of Germany's spies. As I said, they are trying to find me with the object of removing me. This job will be entrusted to one or two men, with a lot of others to lead us off the scent in case we suspect.

"Obviously they will try to get information from the most intelligent criminals—those whom I did not have arrested but have kept under surveillance for this very reason, intending them to act as lightning rods, as it were, whenever enemies try to strike.

"The first thing to do is to find out what German is at the head of this in Calcutta—the German who has orders to find and remove the obstacle, which is myself. Therefore we must watch those rich and influential directors of criminal societies who were not arrested and try to catch them in conversation with Germans. Such Germans—one or two; I do not expect more—will pretend to be idle tourists.

"If our government would only adopt the continental police system of registering all strangers, what a world of trouble it would save us!

"Take one of your boys with you and have him follow any German you discover talking to a known member of the old criminal society. After we get his address we can effectually shadow him, find out the name he lives under and all the rest of it. We must get the German who is charged with the job of getting me. Fifty rupees reward for your virtuous family if you

succeed. If you fail, my Sikh may buy a larger diamond for his best turban."

So the babu, watching von Phul with eyes as relatively small as those of a hippopotamus, wheezingly discovered all manner of faults in the rug until the beard of the rug-seller began to rise like the irritated hair of a fighting terrier. A master of drawling insult of the native pattern, the babu contrived to insinuate that the wretched quality of that wonderful rug was due, not to poor workmanship or material, but to the pernicious influence of the rug-seller's ancestry combined with the devilish corruption befalling all things associated with the religion of the camel-driver of Mecca.

Few Europeans could have grasped the drift of the talk, and von Phul gleaned never a hint of it. He fumed impotently at the lack of interest his presence inspired, at being neglected because of a prospective customer, and, when the babu finally left the shop under a fire of imprecation, the German began to demand explanation. Was he not of far greater importance than a fat black man?

AGAIN the words "black man," but the old Mahommedan passed the implied insult to himself in the reference to the babu's color. He could afford to. His memory had been stirred. Truly, there was but one god. Why, this happening betokened divine interference. It was wonderful. Everything was playing into the rug-seller's hands. The babu had made one little slip—merely a slight carelessness when he had lifted a finger as a signal to a small, pot-bellied boy who had been sitting during the interview in a nearby gutter, wholly interested, apparently, upon the mending of a much-worn kite.

Into the field of the rug-seller's vision of the past, the ungainly babu had sprawled, attended by a small boy. Just what part the babu and his boy had played in bringing about the failure of the criminal enterprise in which the rug-seller was interested, and the consequent loss of his money, the rug-seller neither knew nor cared. That the dissimilar twain had had something to do with it was enough. They were, therefore, connected in some way with the mysterious police organization which, while it was only interested in criminals of the better sort, the rug-seller had told von Phul, was concerned with German spies. Of course the word spies had not been used.

Further, the German had believed it—had believed all the rug-seller had told him, which was much. And God had been good, for here was a chance. The babu was a police agent, and the boy to whom he signalled was his assistant. To rid himself of both would be a joy, a duty and a pleasing revenge. To have the German, whom he both despised and hated, do this for him would be even more delightful.

So the old man ignored the latest insult in an excited and voluble explanation. The German listened delightedly to something like the following:

The police agent, whose duty it was to catch German spies, had been too bold, too careless. Like a foolish fly, he had wandered into the web, and, waiting there to watch, was the boy. Offer the boy a few annas—wealth to him—to carry a parcel which the rug-seller would provide. The boy would never suspect; he was but a child who probably did not guess the meaning of all he did for the babu, but who would surely know where the babu lived and perhaps knew a great deal more about the unofficial police. Boys see much without thinking. When the German had lured the boy to where he wanted him, he would know how to make him tell all he knew. The boy would be glad to go with von Phul. Afterward—well, afterward it would be unwise to allow that boy to again see his master, and there was only one way of shutting the mouth of a boy.

Would von Phul allow any idea of humanity to stand between him and the knowledge of the secret service of the hated British? He would not. This was war, and if children engage in war they must take the consequences. The rug-seller made up a fake bundle. He beckoned the boy who obeyed the summons, wondering but cheerful.

Would the little one carry a small package a little way for the sahib—for six annas? The little one certainly would. Had not the babu offered him one anna to obey any signal to follow any sahib to where he lived and to carry the name of the house back to him? This was fine—six more annas for the same job. Of course there was a package, but it was a very small one.

So the child cheerfully followed the red-faced sahib, dreaming of all the sticky sweet stuff six annas would buy, for he would be virtuous and give the babu's

one anna to his mother. But the six—nay, nay, he was doing a man's work. It was only right, then, that he should enjoy a man's pleasures. He would gamble with the six annas. Who knows—it might grow to a rupee!

The rug-seller rubbed his hands, smiling cruelly. Of course the babu had nothing to do with Germans. His job was to annoy honest men and he had come to the shop hoping to trick the seller of rugs. What had he really meant by the signal? The rug-seller pondered. He had certainly seen that signal, just as he had seen it that other time. It had of course nothing to do with the German. The rug-seller began to feel somewhat nervous. Was something unpleasant about to happen to him? Oh well, the German would question the boy who knew nothing about Germans, but the German would not believe that and would beat the boy—no doubt very badly. And then? What then? If only the babu were in the boy's place!

The boy, one of several who were content to earn a few annas now and then, carrying messages and the like for the babu, knew nothing. The poor child could not even understand why he was asked questions.

LATE that night, when the babu reported to Sinclair, swearing at the unreliability of the boy who had failed to return, the mind of the great Englishman flashed immediately to an explanation.

"The rug-seller recognized you. Then he told the German—probably the man we want—that you were after him—a very shrewd guess or else a lie which was really the truth without the rug-seller's knowing it. The brute lured the child to some place, questioned him and, when the poor litttle chap could not answer, tortured him till he died in agony—the German expecting all the time that he would reveal our address, or more. For, once the German had made up his mind that the boy knew something, all hell couldn't make him change it."

"But—" began the horrified babu.

"You don't know Germans," snarled Sinclair in a tone his henchman had never before heard him use. "*Sesson sahib salaam do.*" This order was given to a servant, his bearer, and when Sesson, the ex-sailor, arrived, Sinclair continued: "Please take one man and go to the house of Das Mohamned, the rug-seller in the Lal Bazaar. Bring him here. I will wait up for you."

So it happened that a very indignant old rug-seller was taken impolitely from the bosom of his family and somewhat forcefully compelled to visit a man whom he had never seen, but whose various activities had raised an almost supernatural awe in the native's mind.

There was no pretense about the rug-seller's fear when, at Sinclair's barred gate, a huge Sikh who knew all about the affair by this time casually mentioned that he had spent an hour sharpening his sword. Nor did his courage return when he was hustled into the small elevator—his first experience with an elevator—which took him up to Sinclair's apartments.

He was, of course, exceedingly indignant and, native-fashion, protested his innocence before any accusation had been made. He was really an old man with whom, as he so plaintively asserted, the chilly night-air did not agree. At the door of Sinclair's room he cursed. Did not the law of the English protect him, too? Where, then, was the warrant for this outrageous proceedings.

But it seemed rather late to ask Mr. Sesson for that warrant. There was something about the personality of that young man which implied that asking for warrants was unhealthy. As a matter of fact, Sinclair held authority above any magristrate and had been known to declare that, so far as he knew, there were no Mohammedans at Runnymede when King John took a lesson in writing.

But Sinclair usually allowed even low caste natives to squat in his presence. This time he did not, old as was the rug-seller. He hardened his heart and, for some minutes appeared to study a type-written sheet of paper, his face hidden.

At length, staring severely at the rug-seller, he spoke—

"I have here a *chit* which tells me of your many crimes."

The rug-seller breathed more freely. So he had not been sent for to explain the disappearance of the boy. He actually smiled.

"You honor knows everything," he said.

"No," corrected Sinclair, "not all things. But I do know that you were conspiring this afternoon with an enemy of the Raj. What?"

"Oh, no, *sahib*," protested the terrified Das Mohammed.

"So? Then, no doubt, there is a small boy at your house. Send for him. I want him."

The rug-seller shivered. He was rich and much of a miser, yet he would have given willingly all of his wealth to be anywhere but in that room and asked to answer that question.

There are certain painful proceedings which are particularly obnoxious to a Mohammedan, and when the rug-seller denied all knowledge of Germans and small boys, Sinclair caused elaborate preparations to be made for that particular torture—of course without any intention of torturing and somewhat doubtful as to the efficacy of the bluff. But the nerves of the rug-seller were sufficiently strained, and he wilted, telling all of the happenings of the afternoon, but quite unable to tell about either the whereabouts of the boy or the German. They had gone away—he had made a package—that was all he knew.

"But you knew—" Sinclair's voice was suspiciously mild— "that the boy would be put to death painfully?"

The old man was dumb, his fertile mind ceased working.

"It is *egara budgee,*" said Sinclair, exhibiting his watch which showed eleven o'clock. "One of my men will stay with you. You will send your servants and friends to find that German and you will have him here by eleven o'clock in the morning. Take him away!"

"But," Sesson protested, "why not hold him?"

"Because we must not leave a stone unturned in trying to find that poor child. We can always get the rug-seller anyway, because he owns too much property to run away and we'd soon hear if he tried to sell it."

MEANWHILE, Sinclair's men were scouring the city without finding a trace of the boy. The babu had done his best to describe the German, but it was as hopeless for an Englishman, even Sinclair, to profit from his description as it would be for an American to attempt to indentify a Chinaman among a hundred others, with nothing more to help than a description furnished by another American. So Sinclair, with the rug-seller gone, secured the assistance of the official police in the search—something he had never done before—and, taking Sesson with him, went out himself to look for the boy.

Even in an American city this would have been a difficult matter. In Calcutta it was almost an impossibility—largely a matter of luck, even with the best of knowledge, for where had the German made his headquarters? Among what disloyal natives might he not be domiciled? It would surely be a waste of time to investigate hotels patronized by Europeans. Where would the German take the boy, intending what he intended?

At one in the morning Sinclair's chauffeur stopped for gas at a public garage. So far, not a trace had been found of either boy or German.

"Suffering cats!"

The usually silent Sesson startled his chief with this ejaculation.

"What's the matter?"

Sesson snorted.

"What idiots we are! *Gulde! Gulde!*" This last to the chauffeur, bidding him hurry.

"Passing the reference to our sanity—or was it yours?" Sinclair began with some sarcasm.

"The ships!" almost screamed Sesson. "German ships in the river. Took the boy there—drop him overboard afterwards."

"My ——, you're right!"

"Yes, and that's where they make their headquarters—change 'em, whenever a ship sails, to a new arrival."

"Your salary is raised a hundred a month," replied Sinclair. "but there are at least forty German ships between the Hastings Ghat and those moored off the Eden Garden!"

"Still it's ——"

"Let me think," begged Sinclair. "Office river police, and hurry!" he bade the chauffeur.

The car screamed through the hot night, millions of insects dashing against the headlights. Startled natives who, without any objective which a white man can comprehend, forever skulk among the shadows of evening, popped into view and disappeared like harried specters. Now and then a pariah dog fled, howling.

The Hughli, like some muddy, mysterious snake forever compelled to twist and twine uneasily between banks of noisy color, echoed dismally as the car stopped, to the bleating song of dingy-wallers. The shadowy office of the river police, housing

a veritable water-god in the person of its chief, seemed to flicker in the changeful glare of its three guarding lights. At the front steps a blandly smiling Sikh salaamed and, to a hurried question, ventured the answer that the sahib was visiting his brother.

"Darned old rake," muttered Sinclair. "Brother, ——! He never had a brother! *Chota sahib kither hi?*"

The assistant chief of the river police was also visiting relations; that is to say, the smiling Sikh, the faithful guardian of the somewhat doubtful reputations of these highly efficient gentlemen, so informed Sinclair.

Had the matter not been so pressing, Sinclair would have enjoyed rehearsing some kindly inquires to be made next day at the club, concerning the healths of the respective relatives of the two policemen. But this was no time for jest, so he roused the native sergeant from his charpoy.

Just what authority the native officer held was somewhat uncertain but Sinclair was not at all concerned about that. That he could order out the swift police launch was sufficient. For the rest, Sinclair intended to appoint himself chief of the river for the remainder of the hours of darkness.

The matter was soon arranged, and the crew summoned to cast off, for the launch, of course, was lying with steam up, ready for any emergency. From the office of the negligent policemen Sinclair gleaned the names and mooring places of every German vessel on the river. Then they started.

But to board and examine more than forty ships is a proceeding that takes much time. Long before the task was completed —a task attended with suspicious delays apparently confirming the theory of Sesson —the sun had commenced his brassy stare, almost instantly dissipating the cool dawn and turning the river into a veritable furnace. But the search continued, even after the seekers felt sure that every German in the harbor had been warned.

"Warned of what?"

Thus Sesson questioned, for it seemed unreasonable to believe that the reason of their quest was an open secret. Yet there it was, that intangible air of baffling conspiracy, that smiling courtesy of officers recently awakened when, by all rights, they should have scowled. Besides, there was apparently no curiosity—that a ship should be searched in the middle of night seemed to occasion no surprize. Imagine the language of a British or American mate roused at 3 A. M. to conduct two nosey policemen about his ship. There would be no personally conducted tour of the vessel—merely strong language and, after advice about a warmer place than Calcutta, a turning over to again seek sleep.

But the Germans acted very differently—a difference which racial submissiveness would not explain. They seemed to know what was wanted—so much seemed obvious. But, in spite of the examination of every German ship, nothing incriminating was discovered, unless the attitude of the officers was to be considered incriminating.

Tired, weary, angry and sick at heart about the missing boy—a strange show of feeling for the British, if the tales of the native mugwumps who tour America be accepted—Sinclair and his assistant went home to receive reports of similar failure from every direction.

BREAKFAST was a silent, angry meal, very different from the usual, yet Sinclair felt that Sesson had been right in his supposition. The river was the ideal place for the spy-nest, and a place where murder could be done almost with impunity. Corpses float down to the sea, each with its crew of crows, perhaps not so frequently as in the old days, but still they float. And what eye can identify a dead person after twelve hours of Hughli wash. Even the black turn white, or nearly so; and many a ship's boy given the easy but horrible job of fending corpses off the cable with a boat-hook has been turned very sick by the sight.

The rug-seller, implicated as he undoubtedly was, could give no further clue. The German had interviewed him. Except that he talked about a coming war when the British would go down to destruction, Das Mohammed knew nought about him. The boy had carried a package. Das was a poor man, and God was good. What did the sahibs—obviously protectors of poor men—expect him to do?

He was advised to meditate upon a future existence which was pictured to him as being little likely to be paradise, where, instead of moonlit eyes, luring smiles and tempting tricks of houris, the inhabitants would wear horns and wag barbed tails. There was,

also, a strong likelihood of his reaching his nether destination in installments—a method of arrival not considered desirable by Mohammedans.

Had any German ship dropped down the river since five o'clock of the afternoon before? No. Small boats, owned by all sorts of people, might travel at night, but not large vessels. Suddenly Sesson swore at himself. Then, speaking softly, he said:

"I suggest you call that very virtuous friend of yours who, when he is not otherwise occupied, acts as chief of the river police. When you get him on the phone, ask him to take charge quietly of every Arab *dhow* below Hastings."

With a whistle of comprehension Sinclair reached for the telephone. A crisp voice—evidently its owner had passed an excellent night and was well rested—answered.

"This is the substitute chief of river police," said Sinclair mildly.

"I'm neither jealous or annoyed, old man," came back over the wire. "No doubt you had a charmingly pressing engagement over in Howrah and did not want to advertise it—hence the borrowing of my launch."

"You young reprobate," laughed Sinclair. "Now, hurry up and get to work. I want you to fix things so that not a soul is able to leave the river on any *dhow*. When that is done, please let me know."

He hung up the receiver.

"Maybe we are locking the stable door after the animal has left," he said to Sesson, "but it's worth trying."

MEANWHILE, the stout babu, who blamed himself bitterly for his lack of caution, was conducting a search of his own. All night he had wandered about. To look for one small boy in Calcutta where small boys are as thick as the dust blown by the monsoon, was a hopeless task, so the babu sought the German, not that there was any great likelihood of finding that enemy of civilization, but because there were fewer Germans than small boys. But the Germans remained unfound. Finally the babu did something he had never done before—he went to a certain opium den to smoke.

It must be admitted that the stout one had hitherto abstained from the alluring drug more from reasons of economy than morality. Many of his friends smoked, and he had often been invited, for, since the importation of opium to China from India has fallen off, trade had been built up at home, but the babu had never tried it. This is the more remarkable in view of the fact that he knew Sinclair had once used the drug—to that use many of his remarkable feats were attributed—and the babu invariably tried to imitate his chief, or rather, the methods of that chief. The stout one, too, was a dreamer, and his friends had told him of the wonderful dreams the poppy created, yet he had held out, a tank full of rupees being in his estimation more precious than all the dreams ever dreamed.

He fully understood the mean, passing motive of revenge which had caused the rug-seller to pretend to the German that he, the babu, as a secret-service man, was his enemy. He knew it was an imagined lie which had by chance been true, and he knew how little the rug-seller could help toward finding the boy. Therefore he realized he was on a blind trail, and, because he was tired and needed soothing, that ended at the opium den—none knew him to be in Sinclair's employment. But for his unlucky signal the day before even the rug-seller would have remained ignorant.

He had merely obeyed Sinclair's orders—to go beyond which was unthinkable. He had signalled to the boy the signal agreed upon as meaning, "follow the sahib, find out where he sleeps, report to me." To have attempted to follow the German himself would have been absurd. Well, if the boy had been successful and the German in the rug shop had turned out to be the one wanted by Sinclair—if only this had happened, the babu would have been fifty rupees the richer. As it was— But there was one small piece of joy after all, one ray of light in the gloom—the Sikh had not won the fifty either.

The babu turned into the blind alley at the end of which lurked the opium den, like some poisonous spider. As he did so, a face peering through the dirty window of a native restaurant which catered to poor whites, broke into a grin of peculiar exuberance. But the babu, beginning to perspire in the first heat of the day, seeking the peace about which his friends had so often raved, troubled with his thoughts, did not observe that face.

The evil mongrel who owned the den was exceedingly polite. Here was a new customer, one to whom one must cater, to be won over and attracted to the place until the drug fastened its unseen tentacles upon him, and there would be no longer any reason to be polite in order to get business. The proprietor of an opium den rarely smokes.

So the stout babu was personally conducted to a nicely situated bunk where the proprietor drove away the waiting boy and rolled and cooked the pills himself.

But the dreams refused to come. Sleep hid behind the first effects, and the babu, instead of paradise, experienced something similar to, but worse than that which attends every boy's first cigar. It is not always so, and the proprietor explained that those whom the drug first makes sick experience greater pleasure than those smokers who are not upleasantly affected by their first attempt. All of which might or might not be true. The stout one, in apparent danger of losing his stoutness, was not interested. All he wanted was to forget there was such a habit as opium smoking in all the world. He rolled in an agony, a fearful sight. Indeed, the proprietor, who could stand a good deal without being sympathetically affected, was compelled to leave him alone to his mountainous heavings.

During a lull, when the babu lay gasping there came to him the sound of high-pitched voices trying to talk quietly. Dizzy, trying to divert his mind from the very smell of opium, the babu listened—at first without caring. Suddenly he began to listen carefully. It was not the hour for many smokers to lie awake, so he rightly concluded that the two customers talking near by had just arrived. Low caste, they evidently were, yet their conversation was decidedly interesting.

"Twenty rupees, he paid me—and all for throwing a dead child into the river."

The other voice expressed a sort of incredulity mixed with wonder at the folly of some people.

"But he was not English. He belongs to that people which hates the English and he was afraid of the law. He had asked the boy questions which he could not answer—the child did not know, but the red-faced one would not believe the boy did not know—so the boy died—very slowly, uttering screams, did the boy die. But what does it matter how he die, when I get twenty rupees for giving his body to the river?"

To this plausible argument the other man agreed.

"Did you have to carry him far?" came the question, after a silence.

"Yes, a long distance. You know where—"

Here he mentioned a part of Calcutta and a certain address.

"No. What manner of house was it?"

The individual who had earned the twenty rupees made lengthy explanation, but still the other failed to locate the place.

"It matters not," he suggested.

"But it does matter. I would have you understand how far I carried that dead boy in the dark, hastening so as to reach the river before the day found me."

Then, to the other's evident annoyance, he talked and explained until the listening babu had made a mental map of the location of the house occupied by the German. The friend of the speaker then admitted understanding, whereupon the other, reminding that he was paying for the smoke and was therefore entitled to be heard, went all over his explanation once again.

At this point the babu rolled out of his bunk. To stand was an agony which brought unpleasant results, but the stout one was game. The suburb of the city wherein the house of the German had been located by the talkative one was at least five miles away. It was generally unknown to the babu, but he would find it and find the house. This time he would make no mistake.

Following Sinclair's example, he would march into that house and take the German at the point of the gun which nestled among his voluminous linen. He was somewhat afraid of that gun, but again he was game. And the talker had stated that the German had gone to sleep, being very tired. Also, he was attended by but one native servant who, no doubt, also slept.

He paid his score and, heedless of the polite inquiries about his health, showered on him by the proprietor, staggered into the narrow lane. The world reeled around him. It was fearfully hot. There was no street car running in the direction he wished to take, and a gharri would cost too much money, so he unfurled his frayed cotton umbrella and began his plucky but terrible walk.

The German might ask for his warrant, but the revolver would take the place of

that. Had the German not committed murder? After walking about a mile, with frequent stops, it occurred to the dazed, stout one that he ought to have called a policeman to arrest the talkers as witnesses. He hesitated. No, he would not go back. The police would force the owner of the den to tell who his customers were. The terrific heat and other things were making the babu somewhat illogical, but, firmly fixed in his mind, was the place where the German slept.

The moist air seemed to whirl above him until it formed a sort of burning glass wherein all the rays of the sun were focussed. These rays, in one point of fire, burned through the umbrella and smote the hatless head of the tortured walker, but he never even thought of quitting.

Slowly he staggered on. The houses were few and far between and there were no shops. With the dripping perspiration blinding him, the dust filling his nostrils to suffocation, the babu took his bearings. Yes, this was the place. Here were the four roads and . . .

A great tank met his gaze. About that tank, grave and stately adjutant-birds stood, now and again dipping theirs beaks into the tank's contents. With a groan of comprehension in which anger was absent, for he was too far spent to be angry, the babu realized that he had been fooled. Where the house occupied by the German had been so carefully located by the talker, was the vast sewerage system of Calcutta. Yes, he had been fooled, and behind these movements the babu recognised the jocular hand of his friend and rival in the matter of fifty rupees—the Sikh guardian of Sinclair's gate.

THAT Sikh, released from his gate-duty for another day, with fifty rupees still unearned, had, of course, seen the babu laboring toward the opium den. To bribe two disreputable friends was an easy matter. So, with the babu out of the race, he went about his search for the German—the finding of the boy having nothing to do with the prize—after a plan of his own, a new plan, certain others having, curiously enough, failed.

The Sikh's idea was, naturally, to put himself in the German's place. Now, if he, the Sikh, were spying, he would swagger boldly about the camp of the enemy. To hide, to slink, to wear a disguise were impossible to a brave man who was also proud. So far the Sikh had adopted other tactics, hence the narrow lane, the dirty shop from which he had observed the babu; and he had worn the ordinary linen and turban of a civilian.

But there had been a time when he had worn a uniform, when he had been the highest non-commissioned officer in his regiment. There were, also, medals. Somewhere he had heard about certain rules which had to do with the wearing of a uniform by discharged men—men who had honorably served out their time—but he had forgotten them. Thus, with the unfortunate babu side-tracked and the chattering hirelings paid after much barter, a swaggering native non-commissoned officer began to frequent the wide streets whereon the principal European shops and hotels were located.

From the babu he had gleaned a vague idea of the German's appearance, and from the shivering rug-seller, over whose head he had waved a drawn sword, he had obtained another and different description.

Thus armed, he waited with oriental patience for the chance the gods always bring to brave men. Fronting a tree-planted square was the large white house wherein the German consul did business. England and Germany being supposed to be at peace, and such things as spies being non-existent to the official tongue, Sinclair had been compelled to give the consulate a wide berth, much as he would have liked to go through the building with about half a regiment at his heels. That the much-wanted German not only visited the consul but also received help therefrom, were foregone conclusions; that he made his residence in the place was unlikely. However, whatever he did, or the consul did to aid him, lay beyond investigation, under the flapping German flag, to annul the privileges of which was even beyond the power of the viceroy. Thus did Britian treat as guests the rats gnawing at her very vitals, even as did the other half of the Anglo-Saxon race under the stars and stripes.

But the Sikh to whom bread and salt was sacred, saw things from a different angle. If it were true—and what Sinclair said could be nothing else but true—that the spies received assistance from that white house, why did not the raja order a regiment of Sikh to clear the place? Ten minutes would suffice to render it fit only for the sweepers.

In this manner he had expressed himself and, as a consequence, had been forbidden to cast the eyes of hate upon the traitor flag over the house in the square. In the glare of the two o'clock sun the Sikh considered the matter. How could he disobey Sinclair without actually disobeying? Only a native of India would have asked himself such a question, and only a native of the Sikh district would have found such an answer.

Sinclair's order had been given to a man who, in civilian clothes, was the servant of the gate, but any man in uniform is the servant of the raja. Can a man serve two masters? Certainly not—that is, not at the same time. Then whose servant was he at that moment? A question of fools! Was he not in uniform? Had the raja, whose servant he was when in uniform, given him any order concerning the house of rats? The raja had not. But does a good dog, a dog whose blood is straight, wait when a rat is attacking his master's grain? Another foolish question. Any dog worthy of his meat kills the rat at once. Therefore he, the Sikh, being the servant of the raja because he was wearing the king's uniform, must act without orders in the best interests of that master.

The Sikh crossed the square and calmly walked up the steps into the white house—sword, British uniform, and swagger. In his turban was a diamond which was *not* uniform, but he ignored this breach of the regulations.

At the top of the steps the Sikh paused, and, as he did so, a door to his right opened. A European bustled out and almost bumped into him. One look sufficed. The European, without doubt, was the German described by both the stout babu and the old rug-seller as the man whom the boy had followed to his doom.

A vision of fifty rupees, and then . . . .

"*Burra sahib*," said the Sikh, salaaming in a most humble manner.

"Yes—what?" The German spoke English.

The Sikh gestured, implying secrecy, servility, everything calculated to impress the German with the black man's loyalty and the importance of some communication he had to make. He glanced about the empty passage.

"*Burra sahib*, the rug-seller, whose servant I am—" Would the German believe such a palpable lie? He did! "—has sent me to say that he has discovered all about the man the fat babu serves. The rug-seller waits you in his house, not in his shop. It is very important, your honor."

THE native genius for detecting stupidity was mixed with the native inability to avoid a veiled insult to a man he despises. What Englishman would allow a native to summon him to a conference? And who but a German would be so blinded by his own imagined dignity as to believe such a story uncorroborated?

"To ride would be foolish, as your honor knows. I will, if your greatness will permit, walk about twenty yards ahead, to guide. Will the great one graciously follow his humble slave?"

The great one would. After all, a short walk was little enough trouble when the end meant honor. Success might mean his being invested with the title of viceroy of India—after that trifling matter of crushing the British Empire was attended to. How greatly the rug-seller must have been impressed. But what man could withstand him? He bent them with his will, moulded them as fire moulds iron. He was becoming somewhat mixed in his metaphors, but the Sikh, walking sedately ahead and chuckling to himself, could not hear.

It was not until they had almost reached their destination that the German recovered sufficiently from the brain-swelling effect of the Sikh's many compliments to wonder how that swaggering person had managed to find him. He had certainly not told the rug-seller, or any one else among the natives he had interviewed, that the best place to look for him was the consulate. What part of the city had they got to? Where was this unknown lane? His eyes narrowed. There was something fishy about all this. He hesitated, then increased his pace and caught up with the Sikh. As he did so, he observed that, but for themselves, the lane was deserted.

"Hey, stop! Where are we going?"

The Sikh did not stop. He turned his head to answer the question, but the German was compelled to keep on walking in order to listen.

"To the rug-seller."

The reply somehow seemed to lack respect.

"I know that, fool! Where is it?"

At that the Sikh stopped, extracted a key from among his clothes and opened a heavy

door in the high wall against which they were standing. Within were shadows and a sort of yard. The German's suspicions roused the beginnings of alarm.

"Tell the rug-seller to come out if he wants to see me," he commanded.

"*Bot atcha, sahib.*"

The Sikh seemed to be about to bow his head submissively. In reality he was preparing for a wrestling trick. The next moment the German felt himself pitched violently into the yard. Before he could recover himself or draw his revolver, the Sikh had swung the door locked and was standing over him with drawn sword, seemingly relishing the situation.

"The rug-seller waits within," explained ed the Sikh in silky tones as the German got to his feet, unable to speak from a sense of outraged dignity strongly tinctured with fear. Then, with a great effort, he recovered himself sufficiently to address the Sikh.

"What does this mean?"

The Sikh grinned, much as a tiger must grin when he finds a succulent young sheep.

Ah! The German understood. Well, any man who would betray one would betray another. He overlooked the fact that the Sikh could not be logically called his betrayer and, putting his hand in a pocket, he pulled out a fat wallet.

"I will double what you are getting for this!"

"Son of a pig, if I wanted your money I would take it! You would not have the chance of offering it. I only accept money from gentlemen!"

The German had offered much more than fifty rupees.

The Sikh pointed to another door which led into a passage. Cowed and somewhat sick from his fall, yet with enough venom left to curse his folly in being so easily tricked into believing the Sikh had come from the rug-seller, the German obeyed the gesture and walked along a passage, with the Sikh's sword unpleasantly near his back, until a small cell became visible, into which the Sikh led him.

"This is your kennel," the Sikh announced, and the German, stumbling forward upon the cement floor, heard the barred door clang behind him with a terrible suggestion of doom.

Who had seen him leave the consulate? No one, so far as he knew, and he was certain that no man, not even a casual native, had followed his movements through the labyrinth of streets and deserted lanes which the Sikh had taken. What did it mean? Who was this truculent Sikh, and how did he know about the conversation with the rug-seller? A gleam of comfort came with the notion that, after all, the rug-seller had sent for him, and the Sikh, his servant, had probably misunderstood the reason for his sending. If that were so, what punishment he would insist upon for the black brute! But, somehow, this idea did not seem true. Oh well, it could be nothing more than a tempory inconvenience, for who would dare —and so on.

The Sikh, grinning delightedly into his great beard, went upstairs in the elevator. His very simple plan had been successful. True, he did not like the notion of admitting to Sinclair that he had disobeyed orders and entered the German white house, in spite of his wonderful argument concerning his change of masters when he changed his clothes and his more than wonderful luck. The plan of seeking a man who fitted the hazy mixture of descriptions culled from the babu and the rug-seller, had given place to what looked like an inspiration.

Was it not certain that the German who had taken the boy frequented the consulate? It was. Well, then, since only one German had been seen to visit the rug-seller—the German who had taken the boy—all the Sikh had to do was to hang around the consulate and tell every German he found there that he brought a message from the rug-seller. The German who understood what he meant would be the German who had taken the boy.

Very simple, like most good plans. And, if he had not been lucky and found the wanted man in the person of the first German he met, the Sikh had been prepared to hang around until he did so—for a year, if necessary.

The Sikh paused a moment outside Sinclair's door, wondering how he could avoid admitting he had disobeyed orders. He knew the character of his master.

The Sikh entered the room and, being in uniform, saluted, but for the life of him he could not avoid grinning at the unfortunate babu who was telling Sinclair his troubles.

"I locked him up," the Sikh announced simply.

"Who?" asked Sinclair carelessly.

"The animal who took away the boy," was the almost casual reply.

WITHOUT another word Sinclair put on the mask which he used to conceal his identity during all such interviews.

The elevator descended with dangerous rapidity. Eagerly they ran to the cell. Sesson switched on the light—the Sikh having thoughtfully left his prisoner in the dark. With one look Sinclair shouted—

"Good lord! The German Consul!"

"Who claims," said the consul with desperate suavity, "the diplomatic privilege."

"It's splitting hairs to call a consul a diplomat," Sinclair said very sternly, "but, of course, when your government asks me for you I will be compelled to let you go."

His voice evidenced regret, disappointment.

"I don't believe we could bring you to trial, either—even if we had proof that you did away with the boy, which we haven't. Of course we know you killed him."

The German now quite sure of both himself and his position interrupted, with a short, corroborative, ugly laugh. But Sinclair continued as if he had heard nothing.

"No, we have virtually no evidence—only the rug-seller's word that the boy followed you, and his word would not weigh against yours. You could even admit this—admit that the boy did carry a parcel for you, after which you paid him six annas. No, we haven't a shred of evidence which would weigh with a jury, even if we could get you into court, so we will be compelled to let you go—when requested."

The Sikh was actually gnashing his teeth, his hands clenching at his sword. His eyes met Sesson's, and both men nodded understandingly. If Sinclair, who was, after all, getting too old for stiff work, chose to stick so close to the law, they would find a way. The boy should be avenged.

"In the meanwhile," the consul spoke silkily, "suppose you give me more comfortable quarters. If you have any sense you will release me at once, but I suppose, like all the English, you are pig-headed and you will wait until my Government makes representations."

"Exactly," replied Sinclair politely. "I will let you go when your government asks me to—not until them."

"Well, it will be the worse for you," the German snarled. "I know you are not an official—only a private individual. If you do not release me at once, I will make a complaint which will be serious for you, not to mention the assault of your servant. Who are you?"

There was no answer.

"Then you mean to keep me here till my people make request, eh? Have you thought of the trouble I will get you into? You are not under the orders of your government and you have no right to keep me here."

There was no answer. A curious feeling of apprehension, a subtle realization of a fact which he did not wish to realize was drenching the German with a terrible fear. Like an ostrich trying to hide its entire body by burying its head in the sand, he talked on.

"You can not prove what I did with the boy, eh? You can not even find his body?"

Sinclair was watching the prisoner closely. How the Germans lack stamina, unless in the mass, he thought. The man was breaking already, and this was only the beginning. But there was no answer to the German's question.

"My people will come soon. Even now they must have missed me—my presence is very important. You had better let me go at once. If I promise to make no complaint will you allow me to go now?"

There was no answer. The German grasped the iron bars of the cell-door, shaking. Then he heaved his weight, as if trying to wrench the bars out of place. His actions contrasted strangely with his recent words.

"I am tired of waiting without a smoke—give me a cigar, please."

There was no answer. The four men were watching him as if he were some recently discovered and very poisonous snake.

"Am I not to smoke?" he shouted.

There was no answer. The knowledge the German had hitherto succeeded in keeping from the surface of his consciousness, now crowded forward. In all the world only the four men who were staring at him through the bars knew where he was confined, and those four men were the mysterious secret police. The house was like many thousands of others in Calcutta. Who would ever dream of his being hidden away in it? With his last remaining will, he turned from the terrible picture he was beginning to see all too clearly. Again he tried to shake the stout iron bars.

"How long—" he could not prevent his voice rising to a scream—"how long before they come for me—my friends come to take me away?"

Sinclair did not answer him. Instead, he turned to his three companions, and the listening German knew the sensations of a man who, having dug his own grave, realizes that he is going to be buried alive in it.

"When it seems that what I am doing is too harsh, too cruel," said Sinclair gravely, "the picture of that tortured child rises up to nerve me. You will keep this animal in this cell, giving him food and water, and light only at meal times—until a friend comes to take him away."

Sinclair turned and began to walk down the passage.

"How long—" Sesson, who did not yet understand, was speaking—"how long will that be, sir?"

Sinclair, pausing, answered almost gently.

"One can never tell. He is only about forty and he appears to be a healthy man."

THE CAMP-FIRE

A MEETING-PLACE FOR READERS, WRITERS AND ADVENTURERS

FROM one of our soldier comrades, a Regular since before the war, and with an uncle who has earned the title "old-timer."

Fort Hunt, Va.

I have an old uncle, an old country doctor, who lives in a little town in South Carolina, and he is one of the old-timers. He is about seventy-five years old and fought all through the great war between the States in the S. C. forces and so fought under Lee and was in all the great battles that were fought in Virginia, and he can tell some stories let me tell you.

After the war he went to Mexico and was in the Foreign Legion in the army of Maximilian, was captured at the same time as Maximilian and was condemned to death but escaped and made his way back to the U. S. Then served some time in the Texas Rangers and at last came back to the old home and settled down to the life of a country doctor, in the mountains of S. C.

I HAVE not seen as big snakes as the writer of the story called "The Snake," Mr. Friel tells about, but I have seen snakes in the Philippines very nearly thirty feet long. I saw one that by actual measurement was 27ft. and 4" and nearly as thick in the largest part as the body of a good sized boy. What his weight was I do not know, as we had no means of weighing him, but he was some snake.

I HAVE also been among the head-hunters and they are some pleasant people, let me tell you. Have seen a good many heads that were taken by some of their famous fighters.

I don't know if you recall the fact or not but the head-hunters from northern Luzon—the Bontoc Igorotes I think—made an attack on the Utah Light Battery with bows and beheading-knives, and were very much surprised when they were raked with shrapnel and machine-gun fire. They laid the blame on the Tagalogs and went after them in fine style, and incidentally took many heads of the tribe aforesaid.

Of all the tribes of savages it has been my luck to run up against, and I have dealt with savages nearly all my life, the Moros were the fiercest and, as Kipling says of the Arabs, "He's a poor benighted heathen but a first class fighting man." I saw two of them charge a company of militia and get just about shot to ribbons and never turn a hair. I saw one attack a sentry and the sentry shoved a bayonet through him and at the same time shot him and the Moro pulled himself up on the bayonet and would have cut the sentry down if I had not blown his head off with a .45 revolver. They were the best fighters, barring none, I ever saw.—WALLACE S. SIMS.

P. S. Red Belts takes me back to ground which I am very familiar with, as I lived in that part of the South for a while when I was a boy. My father was a country doctor and practised in the mountains of S. C., N. C., and Tenn. for nearly forty years and knew well all the stories connected with that part of the country and about Old Nolichucky Jack as well as any man could know them, for his grandfather was one of the men who helped Old Jack Sevier fight Indians, outlaws and Red Coats for many a long year, and lived to be about ninety-eight years old, and left ten sons and eight daughters. So I got all my stories of those times from first hand and some of them were wild let me tell you.—W. S. S.

HERE is some more about the walled cities of Zululand, from Charles Beadle of our writers' brigade who, as you will note, has wandered from the States to Paris:

Paris, France.

DEAR CAMP-FIRE:

W. E. Keever's article on the walled cities of Zululand is particularly interesting to me as I happen to have been in the Niekerk Zimbabwe district—(Inyanga — The Spell: Motokos — The White Frog) and he gives me much information which I did not know. The currently accepted theory there—among whites of course—is that it is the work of the Phenician or else of Arabic origin built or taught by Arab slave raiders from the north.

AS I have seen them and camped among 'em, they covered several acres at a time as if they were the ruins of a small town: triangles and squares of *stone* walls usually about a foot or two high—said conformation suggesting that some crazy giant had been teaching Euclid and illustrating the propositions for the benefit of his pupils. On the tops, too, of kopjes — usually granite and boulder-strewn— were what had been decidedly fortifications: walls remaining breast high with vents for arrows — equally useful for rifles. Upon the side of hills were terraces built up by stone suggesting the terraced vine hills of Greece. On the back of the Inyanga station on a rough kopje was quite an extensive old fortification which we adapted and rebuilt as a fort. "Old workings" of gold mines are all over Rhodesia from Tuli (Big Zimbabwe) in the south to the Ruania River in the North and, as the Britannica says, are now operated with profit.

PERSONALLY I can not swallow the idea that ever the Bantu progressed as far as building these structures or mining as illustrated there. I have almost a conviction that Solomon or some

of the Pharaohs sent their people right down through Uganda, etc., to Rhodesia by *land* and not fleets by sea. Certainly in comparatively modern times Arabs from as far north as the White Nile came down through or round Abyssinia as far south as this, slave raiding as they did upon the other side of Africa, Dongola and Barotseland. I think it is quite conceivable that, say, Solomon's parties would establish distant camps as the Romans did where they would teach their native slaves to build houses as they knew them; for certainly they would remain there some time after such a trip, say, from Egypt.

NOW there is no trace that I have ever heard of the Bantu constructing anything like such permanent dwellings. The Baganda were renowned upon discovery — first I think by Burton although I am not sure. Or was it Baker Pasha? — for the fact that they, a Bantu race, made more or less real roads, broad, and with bridges across swamps etc. If such an advanced race of the Bantu existed, where has it disappeared to? And why? Africa is fairly well explored now. There can not remain a sufficiently large area unknown as to provide a safe hiding-place for this super-Bantu tribe—and report of such doings and things would spread for many hundreds of miles. I can not even imagine a plausible theory to account for their having been wiped out. The men who made those ancient dwellings must have been equally advanced in the arts of war.

Another point: the setting of the sites surrounded with fortified kopjes gives quite the sense of men living in an occupied territory. The baptismal records of the Dominicans mentioned by Mr. Keever do not, I think, dispose of the theory of a ruling or a different race for the "powerful king" might well have been a titular king—the Sultan of Morocco at the present moment is Mulai Ali Mohammed (*I think*, for they change so darned quick out there!) but the French are the rulers all the same.

However I wonder whether some one else can put forward a more plausible theory.—CHAS. BEADLE.

TANNING buckskin. The sample enclosed was certainly good, and here is the recipe.

You will notice that Mr. Hendershot mentions Captain Drannan and I pass it on, not to reopen that discussion, but merely because it is one of, I think, two Camp-Fire opinions that back up Drannan's claims, whereas dozens of you have taken the other side.

Los Angeles.

I recently read the receipt for tanning buckskin, which, although it might produce results, is rather too complicated and laborious.

I enclose herewith a sample of buckskin tanned by the following method, which is much the same as used by the Indians, except that they use the brains of the animal instead of oil.

For genuine oil-tanned buckskin:

1. Flesh the skin by removing all flesh adhering to the skin by scraping with a keen but rough-edged knife.

2. Soak in lime-water (not too strong) until hair slips and remove hair. I generally use a curry-comb.

3. After hair is removed, lay skin (flesh down) over a good-sized smooth log, free from bark or other roughness, and remove "grain" (or epidermis) with the back of a draw-knife. To the novice this seems to take most of the hide, but not so, the "grain" merely being the outer part of the skin, which held the roots of the hair.

4. After removing the grain, wad the skin up and soak in neat's-foot oil for two or three weeks. Then wring out and wash in two or three changes of warm (not hot) strong soap-suds.

5. Before skin becomes entirely dry in any part begin working with the hands to keep from stiffening, which will always result (if not worked) on account of the natural glue in the skin.

During the final drying the skin should be "pulled" and worked. This is done by two persons sitting facing each other and grasping the edges of the skin and pulling (not too hard) and slowly revolving skin horizontally. This process keeps the skin to its natural size and shape.

THE enclosed sample was colored yellow by mixing yellow ocher in the last water. I have tanned many buckskins in Wyoming, Utah and Colorado and find this the easiest and simplest; although it is always tedious work to properly make good buckskin.

I am an old mountaineer, surveyor, trapper, cowpunch, rancher, etc., and have some dope on Jim Bridger and King Fisher which I will send in before long.

Have both of Captain Drannan's books and from my knowledge of the country and stories I have heard, am willing to take it for granted that most of the Captain's stories were at least based on facts.—C. A. HENDERSHOT.

CAMP-FIRE will be glad to hear from any of the still living old-timers mentioned by "Uncle Frank" Huston in the following letter.

Uncle Frank served in the Confederate Army. That is why he prays forgiveness for one of his relatives who fought on the other side. Uncle Frank now manages to be a Confederate and just plain American at the same time.

Los Angeles.

Bill Hickok was in Berdan's sharpshooters of the Yank Army enduring of the war. A certain relative of mine, Joe Huston (the original California Joe who went to California with Fremont prior to Mexican War), was also a member (God forgive him), and he and Bill scouted agin us. Neither liking army discipline, somehow got out, I think. Later a German robed himself in skins and called himself California Joe, and some confused him with the true Joe. Confound him.

HICKOK never made up to Cody, Hickok then being in a John L. Sullivan class, as it were, and Cody a pork-and-beaner. I remember Stocking. Cody was press-agented, as they say now. As for Curley, he was not a Crow, but his mother was.

THE Nortons of Wilcox, who were teaming contractors from Santa Fé to Arizona Posts; the Coulter boys of the Arivapa, Tommy Driscol of Marsh & Driscol, La Lagenea Ranche; Frank and his brother Charlie, who was foreman for Marsh and later for Bill Greene of the Cananea Cattle Company. I forget Charlie's and Frank's last names. Their father was a Missourian, and lived around Salinas or Monterey, but you can get their names. Old Marsh himself, though being a German and a runaway sailor at the time, Claus Spreckels, later Sugar King, in Honolulu and Joe Meyers of the *Patrero* left his whaler in San Diego, all three known to each other, all three from some German peasant burgh and all three ship boys. Joe Meyers married a native California woman, and got a big ranch. His sons live there yet. Marsh married a Mexican woman in Tucson (pronounced "Tookson" and *not* "Tooson"). Any of these and hundreds of others could tell you of "Pache days."

Johnny Dobbs (Deuce 2nd notwithstanding) civilian scout at Fort Bowie, shot plumb to —— and pensioned by the Territorial Legislature. His brother, Capt. Dobbs, an ex-Yank Vol. Cav. Capt., who ten years ago ran, with his son, a livery and express in Phœnix. That fat ex-Yank soldier with a German name I have now forgotten, fine fellow, good scout, and also civilian scout at Bowie, who shook hands with me at the post when I left and twenty-five years later walked into my camp in the Temecula Cañon below Fallbrook with Judge Bell, another ex-Yank swaddie, and was surprised to find it was me he was trailing, he being Deputy Game Commissioner (State), and Deputy Sheriff of Riverside. When last in Riverside I went to courthouse to *wau-wau* with him and they said the words so very, very familiar to me of late years "Oh! he's dead."

"Wyinel" don't you get Buck Connor to get some dope from his people, the Bois Brules?

RENO was a brave Yank soldier enduring of the war, but knew nothing of Indians. He did, however, save his command by good sense and bravery, but was made a scapegoat. (Neurasthenic, hysterical women, with pull at Washington.) Had he obeyed Custer's orders his command and the pack-train would be there now with the others.

—— was in Reno's command and, as soon as he could, skipped and joined the Marines in Boston. Later I heard (Oh, 10 or 15 years ago) —— was the postmaster in —— or some such town in New England.

Or ask Larry North.

Say, these fellows that "have read every scrap of information" make me tired. Closet naturalists and book-farmers all. I can't remember names very good nowadays, but old —— used to be postmaster at Whipple Barracks in the old building just above the Q. M. stores and corral and stables if alive (was in 1908) can give you galore of old Arizona days and dozens of others in other places if I could call 'em to mind.

Andy Mills is an expert on Geronimo campaigners and Pache Kid. Andy's P. O. address Willcox.

AND say, did you ever hear of Fort Bliss—old Fort Bliss, old, old Fort Bliss, old, old, old Fort Bliss? Well, the present is the fourth of that name at El Paso del Norte. The other three were around the bend up the river, having been removed a few hundred yards as newly established, but in 90's under a caretaker. First fort obliterated and second two combined as one with S. P. Ry. passing between.

Fort Grant first built of dobe and later moved across the "crick" a few yards to present location. Camp Grant was further north 40 or 50 miles, at junction of Pedro and Arivapa Rivers, and the 5th Cavalry in '71 moved from there to slope of Mount Grahame and built Fort Grant (the first one).

See if you can get the history of the little town of Tubac, between Tucson and Nogales, from the time it was founded in 16 or 17 something. Lord, the bloody times it has seen!

If you have a friend or correspondent in Washington, get him to go to Soldier's House at Rock Creek and ask librarian to let him look over the books, then to Congressional Library and repeat.

Both are mines of information. Now dig.—FRANK HUSTON.

THE missing white race of China. Now there's a subject that smacks loudly of adventure. Harold A. Lamb brings it up and we know from his stories of *Khlit* the Cossack that Mr. Lamb is no stranger to the past of Asia. He and Major Quilty have been corresponding and the following letter from Mr. Lamb is the result. Can any of you throw additional light? And if Dr. Beech is one of us I hope he'll tell us more about the strange people mentioned below.

New York City.

Here's a point I'd like to pass along to the fellow members of Camp-Fire.

MAJOR T. FRANK QUILTY, Constructing Quartermaster, Columbus Quartermaster Interior Storage Depot, Columbus, Ohio, is the man who asks the question. This is the question, quoted from his letter.

"According to recent investigations, the Blond White Race, or Nordics (our race), now confined to Western Europe, at one time spread across Asia as far as the confines of China. The farthest Eastern sub-division was known as the Wu-Suns or Hiung-Nu in Central Asia, referred to in Chinese annals because of their blue eyes, as the Green-Eyed Devils.

"Do you presume there is the slightest trace of the Nordic race left in these regions? Turkestan, according to Madison Grant (of the American Geographical Society), was at one time as blond as Sweden; the shores of the Caspian being, as regards race, as are now the shores of the Baltic. Bactria, 'The Mother of Cities,' has been, within historic times, a distinctively Nordic city."

A PRETTY big question, this. And the more you think of it the more interesting it gets. Did the white race at one time overrun Central Asia? And has it left traces which can be found today? Did the tribes of the great region from the headwaters of the Yenissei to the Indus, from the Caspian Sea to the western border of the desert of Gobi, have white forefathers!

Major Quilty says, in a second letter, that whether Central Asia was ever dominantly Nordic is open to debate. He adds that Bactria was found by Alexander to be inhabited by a distinctively Nordic people. And that there are—he believes—some Nordic traces still to be found in Afghanistan and in Turkestan—quite distinctively in the Mongolized Kirghizes.

NOW, getting down to fundamentals, Madison Grant, who ought to know, explains that the Nordic race, unlike any other, has the long skull, light eyes, and, usually, blond hair. A tall race—that of (in ancient times) the Persians, Phrygians, Gauls, Goths, Franks, Saxons, Angles, Norse and Normans.

It is the adventure race, as Major Quilty says, *par excellence*. And it's interesting to picture to ourselves the ancestors of the Vikings and Celts sweeping across the highlands of Mid-Asia, driving the round-skulled, slant-eyed and stocky races before them.

Madison Grant says this actually happened, between 1200 and 600 B.C. He mentions by way of proof the Aryan languages, Sanscrit and Old Persian, which were established in Northern India and Mesopotamia. Also the fact that remnants of an Aryan language have been found in Chinese Turkestan. (As to this, didn't the explorer Stein find, in the sand-buried cities near Khoten in Chinese Turkestan, traces of a language similar to Sanscrit?)

SO MUCH for language. Madison Grant, from the viewpoint of the scientist, adds: "Some traces of their (Nordic conquerors) blood have been found in the Pamirs and in Afghanistan. . . . It may be that the stature of some of the Afghan hill tribes and of the Sikhs, and some of the facial characteristics of the latter, are derived from this source."

LANGUAGE and history having given us, briefly—they probably have a lot more to say, if some one will point it out—their points, we'll ask the question of the explorers and adventurers.

Marco Polo says a lot about the mythical kingdom in Mid-Asia, of Prester John, the Christian. But this is no mention of an Aryan race. Marco Polo's story shows he saw, or heard of, an Asiatic people or tribe with an immensely wealthy and powerful ruler who may or may not have been a Christian.

Other medieval explorers speak of the "fair faces and tall bodies" of a semi-Tatar tribe situated about the eastern end of the Thian Shan Mountains—the Naimans, I believe. These were not the Kirghiz, mentioned by Grant.

TWO other medieval priests who traveled across the caravan routes past the Pamirs and Chinese Turkestan (as it is now called)—Fra Rubruquis and Carpini, tell of handsome and tall tribes in the interior, but of no race which resembled Europeans. Naturally, the priests did no skull-measuring. Probably it would not have been a safe thing to try on the Central Asian tribesman of the sixteenth century.

In modern times C. A. Sherring, of the Indian Civil Service, in his trips along Tibet and the British borderland, ran across a tribe in the Southern Himalayas, of the Khasia race, which he states, "is certainly Aryan and connected with that branch of the great Aryan race which . . . spread itself over the great Gangetic Valley." (In the Vedic times mentioned above by Grant.)

AND then, out of a clear sky, comes this story of a modern missionary—Dr. Joseph Beech, president of the West China University at Chengtu, who was twenty years in China.

Dr. Beech says he saw "a tribe of good-sized men, who, for all I could see, were exactly like the Bohemians." (Note: Madison Grant states that the modern Bohemians are of the round-skulled races, like the Asiatic Tatars.)

Furthermore, he says: "My friends told me of another tribe which, as one Chinese put it, 'are just like you.' I was not able to visit this people. They live in the district of Sung Pan. It is ten days' journey, or about 300 miles northwest of Chengtu.

"This tribe resembling Anglo-Saxons was described to me as consisting of large, furious men, whose bravery is considered somewhat of a marvel to the Chinese. 'They never run away any more than you do,' my Chinese friend told me. 'They love to fight.'

"I was told the men often fight duels on horseback which recall the duels of the Middle Ages. The duellists start the fight with a discharge of short blunderbusses—so heavy they rest them on a wooden cross attached to the saddle-bow. I judged they were made by native workmen, and rather inefficient weapons, hurling a handful of slugs.

"The second stage of the duel is fought with stones, of which each has a bag. If the bags are exhausted without serious injury, the duellists draw nearer and throw spears tied to the ends of ropes so they can be pulled back and thrown again. Meanwhile the two horsemen are circling around and constantly getting closer.

"In the final stage the antagonists ride up to each other and fight hip to hip with great swords, after the fashion of Richard the Lion-Hearted. The duel always goes to a decision, my Chinese friend told me."

(Has any one ever seen a Central Asian tribesman with a "short blunderbuss," or short gun of any kind?)

DR. BEECH mentions a medieval castle that he saw on the border between China and the tribes country "which was totally unlike Chinese architecture."

Possibly the Chinese friends of Dr. Beech—the Chinese enjoy a good story and are prone to exaggeration—were describing one of the tribes of the mountain Kirghiz, who are good fighters and better horse-thieves. By the way, the Kirghiz tribes are not confined to the steppe around the western Thian Shan. Their *auls* stretch north and east, well across the borders of Mongolia and into Siberia. E. H. Wilson, the naturalist, was ten years in the country around Chengtu and mentions no Aryan-looking tribes.

Dr. Beech is now in this country. Perhaps some one in the Camp-Fire knows him, or his experiences, and can get word to us from him.

PERHAPS some tribes of Aryan descent are to be found in the interior of China, between the Kuan Lung Mountains and the headwaters of the Yang-tze (the Sung Pan Ho and the Ta Ho rivers).

Tibet is rather out of date as the Forbidden Country. The only district of Central Asia not yet visited—to my knowledge—by white explorers is the Kuan Lung region, mentioned above.

The Sung Pan district, of which Dr. Beech speaks, forms the southeastern corner of this region. Wilson went as far as the Chinese military post of Sung Pan, without trouble except from vermin and native curiosity.

Sven Hedin crossed the western boundary of this region, but tells of no unusual tribes—of very few tribes at all, in fact.

Marco Polo must have crossed from Khotan into China proper along the north side of this "blind spot" region. Incidentally, Marco Polo says the khan he christens "Prestre John" lived in this blind spot south of the Kuan Lung. Another strange fact—Mr. Ney Elias says that while on the northeast corner of this blind spot, "An old man called on me at Kwei-hwa-ching who said he was neither Chinaman, Mongol, nor Mohammedan, and lived on ground especially allotted by the Emperor, and where exist several families of the same origin. He said he had been a prince." The tale of the old man was interrupted and Elias was warned against asking questions.

CAN any member of the Camp-Fire shed light on these tribes of Central Asia? Perhaps the English or Oriental men can do so. At present Major Quilty's question is unanswered.—H. A. LAMB.

YOU know, those of you who have written saying good things about the Camp-Fire, and our magazine, that, while I surely appreciate it, I cut this praise out of all such letters when other parts of them are printed. Maybe I've yielded to a particular temptation a half-dozen times in all the years our Camp-Fire has been burning, but there's been almost none of it. It would spoil the whole spirit of our Camp-Fire if it even seemed to be a place for advertising the magazine by printing "words of praise."

And yet today it struck me for the first time that in a way it is an injustice to all the rest of you, for *you* are the Camp-Fire. There couldn't be any without you. And the words of praise are really directed at you.

Also it struck me that none of us except us here in the office (who see all the letters that come in) can have even a faint idea of how very many people swear by our Camp-Fire, of how keen is their interest in it and their loyalty to it. Thousands of letters come in that really ought to be passed on to all of you, for you'd enjoy hearing their kind words and knowing how blamed many of us there are. Not much soft stuff, but the kind of talk you know is meant—all the stronger because it doesn't wallow around in language but says its say briefly, man-fashion, and goes on to something else.

NO, I'M not going to hand out a bunch of it by way of samples. The most important thing is to keep Camp-Fire from even looking like an admiration society or an advertising scheme. But I do want you all to know that there are many thousands more of us than most people think and that there's a whole lot more comradeship and loyalty than appears on the face of the letters when they get into type. Also, that we could fill Camp-Fire many, many times over if we printed all the letters.

If anybody with an ingrowing case of "show me" thinks there's any "hot air" about this, let him come into the office, or delegate a friend to do so, and, without showing any letters whose senders would mind having them shown, I'll give him a look at the day's correspondence, or the letters waiting their turn at Camp-Fire, or letters from the files, and let him make his own estimate from whatever reasonable test *he* thinks is fair. All I ask is that, if he is convinced, he will sign a statement to that effect, let me print it in Camp-Fire over his name and address and agree to answer any of you who might write to find out whether he was a real person or a name faked by me.

There are always some people like that, but I think most of you realize, from the kind of letters we have at Camp-Fire, that there are quite a lot of people sitting around it and that they are its pretty good friends.

Just one thing more. I want to add that a very high percentage of those letters close with hearty good wishes for the Camp-Fire and its members.

ANOTHER letter written a year ago and only just coming to the surface among the other letters waiting to be heard at Camp-Fire. No, it doesn't take a year for most letters to get in. When letters, with interest for Camp-Fire, come in I put them all in one place and draw on them more or less haphazard when getting together material for our twice-a-month meetings. Sometimes I get a systematic streak and dig out the old ones first; sometimes I succumb to the informal and adventurous spirit of our Camp-Fire and just

take things as they happen to come. My days are full enough of systematic routine and I know you won't grudge me a rather free and easy time in getting things ready for our meetings. After all, I'm the fellow who has to tend to our chores—usher, janitor, sergeant-at-arms, sort of a toastmaster and so on. Be easy on the hired help.

Camp Upton, N. Y.

The "What Is Adventure?" discussion of the Camp-Fire has my pen hand itching for some time, but it took Mr. Young's answer to Mr. Hatheway to finally compel action.

I LAY no claim to be the final word on the spirit of adventure, but I do know this: It is interesting to spin the yarn about the stove whereon I had a kettle of beans for six hours, and then ate them half raw because that stove—despite mud and dry firewood—sent all the heat up the chimney and the smoke into the cabin. It's interesting to tell the yarn *now*, and to laugh at the idea of being held in that stray cabin by a raging storm, but at the time it wasn't adventure; it was a —— nuisance. And I have noticed that books of adventure—authentic yarns—are mostly written after the events have occurred, while those written during the time and action being recorded present the picture much as a workaday affair.

BUT to return to Mr. Young. When considering his advice for intellectual adventure: "Prowl out beyond the apex end of the triangle of the known into the unknown realms," always remember Punch's advice to those considering marriage: "Don't." You'll find queer things out there, all right, but if it's adventure you're after, try something safe. Such, for example, as going to the zoo and crawling into the grizzly bear's cage, or tickling a mule's heel, or jumping off Brooklyn Bridge. For when hunting the "Me in one" and the—but never mind—the original "one" is in danger of being lost! Them's facts.—WM. A. GOOD.

ANNUAL VOTE

THE last call for our annual vote by readers on the ten best stories published by our magazine during 1919. Voting is an easy matter. Here are the particulars:

ALL you need do is write the titles and authors' names of the ten stories you consider best, given in order of preference, and mail us the sheet of paper to reach us not later than January thirty-first. If you like, add as many as ten more for honorable mention. As in past years, short stories, novelettes, novels and serials are included, poems "Camp-Fire" and the other departments are barred out. The issues covered are those dated January 3, 1919, to December 18, 1919, inclusive. Serials only parts of which are contained in these issues are included.

We very sincerely want your cooperation and help in getting for *Adventure* the kinds of story and the authors that a majority of our readers like best. If you know of a better way of furthering this cooperation than is the annual vote by readers, name it, for we are ready to try any legitimate plan that will help register your wishes in the making of the magazine. It's not only common sense to strive for this but it's a lot happier and more comfortable all around if people work together in friendly fashion.

WHILE the departments are excluded from the vote we'll be more than glad to get suggestions for improving them. Or adding to them, but don't forget that "Letter-Friends" and "Wanted" have already been tried, and, though successful and popular, had to be given up because two or three readers abused them.

And if you have any suggestions concerning the magazine in general or any part of it, by all means send them in. I mean constructive suggestions that will definitely point out ways for improvement. Wherever we can meet your ideas we will, but remember that it is the majority whom we must please and that, while a given plan may please a minority and perhaps us here in the office, if it fails to please the majority it is not warranted.

But the only way to find out what the majority want is for the readers themselves to tell us. And you are one of the readers.

THE following letter was addressed to one of you who had made inquiry through the magazine.

Toledo, Ohio.

Noting your letter for information in the current issue of *Adventure*, would call your attention to the remarkable resources in your line, which may be obtained in Peru, which country I have represented as Consul to the State of Ohio. Any encyclopaedia will give you an idea of the natural resources of that country. The works of Humboldt, which may be consulted at your library, also will give you some remarkable statements as to the natural mineral resources.

PERSONALLY, I have been interested in that country financially and had at one time what was considered the richest placer grounds in the world in area. There are places where two of you, with men to do the hard work of digging and shoveling, can actually pan out several hundred dollars per day, and it is a matter of fact, that the natives in certain districts in Peru are in the habit of spreading across the dry torrents, in Summer, skins of the jaguar, in such a manner that the fur smooths up stream. In other places they spread riffles of stone, a few yards apart, forming what appears to be little fences all around cobble-stones about six inches in diameter.

During the freshets and the thawing of the snows of the Andes Mountains, these rivers swell and then recede again in a few hours. After the rivers become dry the skins are taken up by the natives, dried over a fire and then beat with sticks, which causes gold-dust in flakes to fall on a blanket spread on the ground. The little stone fences and riffles also are then scooped up and gold-dust taken in paying quantities.

As a matter of fact, nearly all of the gold which is now produced in Peru is obtained in this manner by the Indians. No placers are being worked. The educated Peruvians are too lazy to do this work, so that the country is still virgin, as far as prospectors in placers are concerned.

I HAVE personally seen in the north of Peru such an abundance of crude oil that it escapes in some of the small streams flowing into the rivers, staining the waters for miles. There are wells in Peru worked by the British along the coast, some of which are almost built in the surf in the Pacific.

It seems to me that you and your companion would do a thousand times better in the Andes Mountains of Peru, prospecting for gold-dust, or in in the northern district of Peru, prospecting for oil, which can be sold in Panama, where there exists a pipe-line crossing the Isthmus. (See my "Guide to Modern Peru" in your public library). I know India and its conditions and would certainly advise you to try Peru by all means—cheaper, healthier, nearer home and much more profitable.—D. R. A. DE CAIRMONT, M.D.

Since the subject fell within Edgar Young's department of "Ask Adventure" I passed the letter (a copy of which was courteously sent me) on to him. Here is his letter in comment. I do not think he meant to warn me personally against buying gold-mine stock. If he did, my thanks to him for very good advice. I trust, however, that I didn't need it.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

The peculiar part of this letter is that it is absolutely true and its statements can be backed by any one that has traveled in the highlands of Peru. The skins he speaks of are used to catch "flour" gold that is so very light it defies the laws of gravity and would otherwise be lost. The hair on them serves the same purpose that moss does on stones in some of our own rivers. Any old prospector has "moss hunted." By that I mean has gone along some gold-bearing stream tearing off moss from stones and shaking the dust from it into his pan and washing it when he has a panful, using quicksilver to pick the gold from the remaining dust. The other way of putting down cobblestones and building riffles is nothing but making a natural sluice-box in the bottom of a stream and is exactly the same principle as our own placer mining.

THE amount of gold and silver and tin that have been taken from Peru and Bolivia would be almost unbelievable were it not a matter of record and history, and great quantities of them are being taken from there to-day. Even the Cerro de Pasco Copper Company get enough gold from their copper to pay all operating expenses, or that was what I heard when I worked at Cerro. And Peru has nothing on Bolivia. I will have to demur that far.

I suppose you read Doctor Mozans' account of his trip "Along the Andes and Down the Amazon," which was published in the magazines and is now in book form (New York, D. Appleton & Co., 1912). In snatching for a book to uphold this letter's statements I turned to pp. 183 and 184 and find the following:

"The republic (Bolivia) is celebrated for its mines of gold, silver, tin, and other metals, but in no mineral region in the world has 'Nature ever offered to the avidity of man such mines of riches as those of Potosi,' that *preliosa margarita de la Naturaleza*, which, it has been estimated, has produced from two to four billions of dollars. . . . Although it may never be possible to find another Cerro del Potosi in South America, it is, nevertheless, certain that there are untold fortunes awaiting the prospector in Bolivia and Peru. The mines of Cerro de Pasco, Hualgayoc, and Pulacayo, from which many hundred million dollars worth of the precious metals have been taken, give some idea of the immense treasures still awaiting the enterprising miners of the future."

EASTERN Ecuador, Eastern Peru, and Eastern Bolivia are full of gold. All of the Indians that inhabit this country have plenty of dust to trade, which they get about $11 an ounce for in goods at high prices. The Indians of Central America get about $16 and the gold is worth $20 an ounce. *The Pan-American Bulletin* recently published a photo of a nugget picked up in Eastern Boliva, life-size, which occupied a full page. All of the data of the Pan-American Union will back statements in regard to the gold, silver, copper and tin of the countries mentioned, and all literature of these countries will do so without any exception. Humbolt says, and is quoted by Doctor Mozans as follows: "The abundance of silver in the Chain of the Andes is in general such that when we reflect on the number of mineral depositories, which remain untouched, or which have been very superficially wrought, we are tempted to believe that Europeans (Doctor Mozans—, and he might have added the people of the United States) have yet scarcely begun to enjoy the inexhaustible fund of wealth contained in the New World."

HERE'S the big idea. Do not buy stock in placer mines and do not buy stock in any fly-by-night stock companies. A good placer mine does not have to sell stock for the very reason that half a dozen men can get out enough to start any kind of plant they need. The other statement refers to bitter experence that is to be had in any gold-mining country. My advice is go and hunt it for yourself. I am saying this to get in the clear.—EDGAR YOUNG.

THERE has not been time yet to hear from you on the final plans for "Camp-Fire" or *Adventure* stations all over the world.

The strong points of the plan, so far as developed, are its simplicity and elasticity. Almost no outlay is required—a register book, a sign and a box for letters. Each station must have these. It need have nothing else, but on the other hand, it can have a great deal more. That is a question to be decided locally, in each case, by the owner of the shop or home or by the local resident members of our Camp-Fire. It can even be made into a local club with a welcome for traveling members, a center through which members of Camp-Fire can find one another and get acquainted.

Send in your name if you're ready to start a station in your shop or home, or suggest other places for stations.

LOOKING AHEAD FOR DEMOCRACY

WHY does not some gifted pen set to work on a howlingly funny series of unpopular articles under some such title as "Our Little Imbecilities" or "Where We are Easiest" or "Why We are Goats"?

The other day I voted at the Republican primaries for a local election. I'm not really a Republican, thank God, any more than I'm a Democrat or any of the others, thank God. But if I am to have my one-citizen voice in the people's public affairs, like every other American I am allowed to speak only through the apparatus belonging to some political party. Limitation No. 1 on real democracy. An American citizen is not allowed to speak independently and directly, at least not above a whisper.

Can I choose my party at a primary? Not at all. Only the party whose ticket I happened to vote at the last election. If a good man, even my best friend, is a candidate for any other party I can't vote for him. Another limitation.

WELL, anyhow, I voted at that primary, determined to do my small part so far as it goes. Eight men could be voted for. Two aldermen and six others. For some reason no candidates' names were printed for alderman and I could vote for anybody. Fine, except, that, as in the case of most citizens, the primaries had come upon me unawares. (The party machines take care not to advertise them much and ordinary Americans of course would never take sufficient interest.) The only decent people I knew weren't running for any office, probably couldn't be persuaded to and certainly if I voted for one of them he would almost surely poll a total of one vote. I didn't know who *was* running for alderman and would probably have known nothing about his fitness if I had. (New York is a very large place and such means of getting information as exist are untrustworthy or have to be hunted for. The few reliable ones don't hunt *you* up.) Another limitation, and not so much a matter of chance as it seems.

FOR one of the six other offices I had a choice among three men. For another, between two men. For the four others, no choice at all; the party machine had printed only one name under each. Vote for that one man or lose your vote. Unless you care to give a solitary vote to some hopeless candidate of your own. Another limitation.

In the case where there were two candidates it happened I had once seen one of them. Patriotism dictated that I should vote for the other one. Sight unseen, he couldn't have been any more of a crook than the first one. I may not be an expert at face, voice and bearing reading but even an amateur can size up certain cases.

Of the three candidates two had sent all "Republican voters" a printed plea, each abusing the others and each damning himself in the eyes of any thinking person. The third fellow at least talked like a man, though he may merely have been playing the game another way. So I voted for him and went home.

AND yet I call myself a free-born, independent citizen of the glorious land of the free and home of the brave! I'm not. I'm just a goat. Or a sheep. And so are you. Unless you are part of some party's machinery, in which case you are very, very probably a crook. Not necessarily the kind of crook that gets into jail or even that could be sent there under our present laws. But the kind of crook that is a traitor to his country and that, if he could once see things in their proper light, would, however callous his conscience, hang his head in shame.

Sheep, goats and asses. Yet we think we are the controllers of a democracy!

WHAT I have said is no indictment of the primary system. That is at least a step better than the old way, for it gives decent citizens a better chance *if only they would take it*. The whole trouble is that we neglect our duties as citizens and let the politicians run the whole works. They are organized; we are too apathetic to organize. They put their time on public affairs; we don't.

Would Socialism or Bolshevism improve matters? Not a bit. In a little while any new system would settle down into equally dirty ruts. You can't build a sound house out of rotten bricks. You can't build a good government out of bad citizens. And nearly all of us *are* bad citizens. Many of us think we're not, but we are.

UNDER either the primary or the convention system we *could* smash the politicians' machines into junk. We *could* get real democracy just as things are. If only we were good citizens and ran our own affairs instead of letting a few politicians bamboozle us with the party system.

The trouble is that we don't know what good citizenship really is. We were never taught. Our children aren't being taught. The churches teach us morals, the schools teach our brains and hands, but there isn't anything to teach Americans what good citizenship is. That's funny.—A. S. H.

VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES FREE TO ANY READER

THESE services of *Adventure* are free to *any one*. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules*, thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we *can* help you we're ready and willing to try.

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Dutch, Portuguese, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Metal Cards—For twenty-five cents we will send you, *post-paid*, the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope, but no postage. Twenty-five cents covers everything. Give same data as for pasteboard cards. Holders of pasteboard cards can be registered under both pasteboard and metal cards if desired, but old numbers can not be duplicated on metal cards. If you no longer wish your old card, destroy it carefully and notify us, to avoid confusion and possible false alarms to your friends registered under that card.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Back Issues of *Adventure*

WILL BUY: Issues containing the serial story, "Peter the Brazen."—Address W. O. GOLDSBERRY, 1202 Moro St., Manhattan, Kansas.

WILL SELL: June, 1917; Mid-May to Mid-June, 1918 (inclusive); Mid-Jan. to First-June, 1919 (inclusive). Ten cents per copy, plus seven cents postage, each.—Address O. C. KLEIN, 2322 Washington St., Vicksburg, Miss.

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied. Unclaimed mail which we have held for a long period is listed on the last page of this issue.

Camp-Fire Buttons

To be worn in lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere.

When sending for the button enclose a strong, self-addressed, *un*stamped envelope.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Addresses

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. First suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it, aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 1833 S St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

High-School Volunteers of the U. S.—An organization promoting a democratic system of military training in American high schools. Address *Everybody's*, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Remember

Magazines are made up ahead of time. An item received today is too late for the current issue; allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

1. ★ Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

2. The Sea Part 1
BERIAH BROWN, Seattle Press Club, 1309 Fifth Ave., N. E., Seattle, Wash. Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S. and British Empire; seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. ★ The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Such questions as pertain to the sea, ships and men local to the U. S. should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown.

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Michigan and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; river, lake and road travel, game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs; and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HAFFSBURG LIEBE, 6 W. Concord Ave., Orlando, Florida. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina, Florida and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

6. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine. Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Middle Western U. S. Part 1
CAPT.-ADJ. JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, care *Adventure*. Covering the Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas. Hunting, fishing, travel. *Especially* early history of Missouri Valley.

8. Middle Western U. S. Part 2
JOHN B. THOMPSON, P. O. Box 1374, St. Louis, Mo. Covering Missouri, Arkansas and the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big timber sections.

9. Middle Western U. S. Part 3
LARRY ST. JOHN, 714 Crilly B'ld'g., Chicago, Ill. Covering Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Lake Michigan. Fishing, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, clamming, early history, legends.

10. Western U. S. Part 1
E.E.HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

11. Western U. S. Part 2 and Mexico Part 1
J. W. WHITEAKER, Cedar Park, Texas. Covering Texas, Oklahoma, and the border states of old Mexico: Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, natives, hunting, history, industries.

12. Mexico Part 2 Southern
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure Magazine*, Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Covering that part of Mexico lying south of a line drawn from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, natives, commerce.

★(*Enclose addressed envelope with 5 cents in stamps, NOT attached*)
Return postage not required from U. S. or Canadian soldiers, sailors, or marines in service outside the U. S., its possessions, or Canada.

13. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 1
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Covering Height of Land and northern parts of Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. R'y); southeastern part of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer, Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit.

14. North American Snow Countries Part 2
HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., covering south-eastern Ontario and the lower Ottawa Valley. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel, camping.

15. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 3
GEORGE L. CATTON, Gravenhurst, Muskoka, Ont., Canada. Covering Southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing.

16. North American Snow Countries Part 4
ED. L. CARSON, Burlington, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

17. North American Snow Countries Part 5
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Covering Alaska. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

18. North American Snow Countries. Part 6
H. S. BELCHER, The Hudson's Bay Company, Ft. Alexander, Manitoba, Canada. Covering Manitoba, Saskatchewan, MacKenzie and Northern Keewatin. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel.

19. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 632 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. Covering customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

20. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure Magazine*, Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

21. South America. Part 1
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure Magazine*, Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Covering Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile. Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

22. South America. Part 2
P. H. GOLDSMITH, *Inter-American Magazine*, 407 West 117th St., New York, N. Y. Covering Venezuela, The Guianas, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentine Republic. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, natives, languages, hunting and fishing.

23. Asia, Southern
GORDON MCCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports; hunting, trading, traveling.

24. Philippine Islands
BUCK CONNER, Box 807A.—R. F. D. No. 10, Los Angeles, California. Covering history, natives, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, exports and imports; manufacturing.

25. Japan
GRACE P. T. KNUDSON, Castine, Maine. Covering Japan: Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

26. Russia and Eastern Siberia
MAJOR A. M. LOCHWITZKY (Formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), Austin, Texas. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalien; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

27. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, Eagle Bird Mine, Washington, Nevada Co., Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

28. Africa Part 2
GEORGE E. HOLT, Frederick, Md. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, etc.

29. ★ Africa Part 3 Portuguese East Africa
R. W. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Covering trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc.

30. ★ Africa Part 4 Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East Africa, Uganda and the Upper Congo.
CHARLES BEADLE, 7 Place de Tertre, Paris, XVIII, France. Covering geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, mining, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, opportunities for adventure and sport.

31. ★ New Zealand and the South Sea Islands
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen.

32. Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, Hotel Sydney, Sydney, Australia. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history.

FIREARMS, PAST AND PRESENT

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers and ammunition. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district in question.)

A.—All Shotguns (including foreign and American makes). J. B. THOMPSON, Box 1374, St. Louis, Mo.

B.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers (including foreign and American makes). D. WIGGINS, Salem, Ore.

FISHING IN NORTH AMERICA

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

J. B. THOMPSON, Box 1374, St. Louis, Mo. Covering fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting; live bait; camping outfits.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen. Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Commission, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

FOR ARMY, NAVY OR MARINE CORPS

What the Government is doing for discharged soldiers and sailors. Facts not opinions given. No questions answered involving criticism or bestowing praise or blame. Enclose stamped addressed envelope. Address—SERVICE, THE HOME SECTOR, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City, New York.

★ *(Enclose addressed envelope with 5 cents in stamps NOT attached)*

The following "Ask Adventure" editors are now serving in our military forces. We hope you will be patient if their answers are at times delayed: Capt.-Adj. Joseph Mills Hanson, Major A. M. Lochwitzky.

On Going to Brazil

TOO many Americans are rushing off to Latin America these days on the flood tide of our foreign trade boom without finding out exactly what they are up against. There are tremendous opportunities for success there, but seldom for the man who trusts blind luck. Here are some invaluable pointers:

Question:—"I have thought of Brazil as a land where there might be opportunities for one who has had experience in clerical and railroad work. Incidentally I have just been discharged from the C. E. F. I would like to ask the following:

a. What language is spoken in Brazil, and what is the condition of the labor market?

b. Are there chances for employment on the plantations near Rio Janeiro as a book-keeper?

c. How far up-country can I follow the Amazon River by steamer, and what are the modes of travel after reaching the head of navigation?

d. Where are the diamond mines, and what are the chances for prospecting?

e. What sort of climate has Brazil? What are its seasons?

f. What chances are there for sport with rod, gun and camera?

g. Would you advise one to go to Brazil in preference to some other country?

I have been in Australia and the South Seas and stood the intense heat all right. Don't fancy reptiles, which, I am told, abound in Brazilian jungles, but guess I could manage with them. I have a little capital."—P. E. EDWARDS, Toronto, Canada.

Answer, by Mr. Goldsmith:—I am pleased to reply to your letter. I answer the questions in the order in which you place them.

a. The language of Brazil is Portuguese. One who knows Spanish thoroughly can get along in Brazil, although the people somewhat resent the use of Spanish by one who does not speak the language as a native, because they think that if one had to learn Spanish or Portuguese, he ought to have learned Portuguese if he expected to be in Brazil. You would probably find it easier to obtain instruction in Spanish than in Portuguese. If, however, you definitely decide to go to Brazil, it would certainly be better to try to learn Portuguese.

b. There are opportunities of employment, but I think you ought not to go without having made some sort of connection. You might write to W. R. Grace & Company, 7 Hanover Square, New York City, who have large shipping interests in Brazil. They might offer you something.

c. Regarding up the Amazon: The Amazon affluents are navigable for about forty thousand miles in steamers or in small native craft. There is really no "head of navigation" in the ordinary sense. It is necessary to decide which one of the affluents one wishes to follow before any definite statement can be made. A number of steamship lines exist.

d. There are diamond fields in Central Bahia, in Matto Grosso, along the river Coxipó Mirim and in the Cannavieiras district (Salobro). A license to prospect is easily obtained. There is a chance for interested prospectors or groups, as there are no great monopolistic mining companies.

e. In the extreme north, which is exactly under the Equator, it is always hot, there being little perceptible variation in the climate. South of the Equator the seasons are reversed, the Winter months being June, July and August, and the Summer months December, January and February. At Rio de Janeiro the Summers are hot, the Winter is comfortable. From São Paulo to the southern limits the climate is not unlike that of Italy, the temperature depending largely upon the altitude.

f. There are all the chances you can dream of for sport, with gun, rod and camera.

g. I can not give advice. The place to which one goes must depend upon what he has in mind. Unquestionably there are great opportunities in Brazil, but they exist everywhere, according to one's aptitudes. I suggest that you try to make some sort of connection before you go to any of the southern countries.

Regarding Smokeless Powder

JUST how long good smokeless powder will retain its strength is of vital importance to all who use rifle or revolver. In what follows two gun-lovers swap experiences from which we all may learn:

Question:—"I am prompted to give you my experience with smokeless powder after reading C. R. in *Adventure*.

About thirteen or fourteen years ago I bought a Colt automatic .32 cal. for my wife, as at that time we lived at the foot of the mountains in southern California and often had to be gone all day. I selected the automatic as I considered that with thorough instruction it was a safer gun for a woman to handle than a revolver; and nothing has occurred since to change my views. I had heard that smokeless losses its force in a short time, so from time to time would get a fresh supply.

As it happened there were about thirty shells left in one box of soft-nosed bullets at that time, and three or four years later about the same number of hard-nosed ones.

Then we moved, and the gun and shells were laid away and hardly touched for years. The result was the gun barrel got badly rusted inside. In spite of a thorough greasing I naturally thought it was ruined, but I scrubbed it out with a wire brush as thoroughly as possible. And one day last Fall, we took it out in the country near here to where a dredger had thrown up great piles of silt sand and clay, all mixed up. We put up a mark against the bank and loaded up with fresh shells.

It was with some misgivings that I took the first shot, but nothing happened. Then we loaded up with the hard-points that were at least eight years old, that had never been shaken up except when we moved. Not one missed fire, and all penetrated as deeply into the sand and clay as the fresh ones.

Then we tried the oldest soft-points. Only one of the lot failed to have force enough to extract and reload, and the report from one or two others did not seem quite as loud as it should be. I dug out a number of bullets from the hard, dry clay and sand and found all the old soft-points mushroomed

to about two-thirds their original length and to about one and one-half their diameter. Notwithstanding the opinion of W. E. Mepham, a pistol ball does get up sufficient velocity to mushroom. Have you not found this to be true?

After emptying a couple of clips, I examined the barrel and much to my surprise it was clear of rust and apparently as bright and good as new.

Another experience I had with smokeless was when I loaded 500 .30-30 Winchester primed shells in the year 1899, with Dupont's black smokeless, the grains of which looked for all the world like short sections of the lead of a lead pencil. Those shells had much greater penetration and uniformity than factory-loaded ones, and ten years later had lost none of their original force.

But a little that was left in the can had no force at all in trying to split a tree stump.

It is pretty hard to beat a Colt .44 or .45 up to 200 yards for accuracy. I have a very old one that was found in central Arizona by a Navajo Indian, who sold it to a post trader; later I bought it for .75. Cleaned it up and repaired it and tried it out. It has an 8-inch barrel. The chambers are so close together I had to file off most of the rim of the .44-40 Winchester rifle cartridge. Engraved on the cylinder are a number of sailing warships engaged in battle, and the date: "Engaged 16 May, 1853" and also "Colts Patent No. 4388." Along the top of the barrel is; "address Col. Saml. Colt, New York, U. S. America." The handle is one single piece of bone, and as yellow as bone ever gets. It fits the hand perfectly.

I can shoot better with that old gun than any other revolver or pistol I ever tried. It will penetrate 4 inches of pine at 150 yards. I have had it over twenty years and it does not look a day older than when I bought it. I only wish I knew its whole history. If it only could talk!

Answer, by Mr. Wiggins:—In reply to your letter in regard to your experience with smokeless powder, I will say that long disuse seems to have very little effect on dense smokeless, such as the automatic-pistol ammunition is loaded with.

This is a nitroglycerin powder, and from your statement as to the time elapsing since your purchase of the pistol and cartridges, I am inclined to think that the powder was Bullseye, made by the Dupont factories.

While I have never used any pistol ammunition so old, I have used in my Krag rifle cartridges loaded in '05 and '06, and I was unable to note any difference in their velocity and penetration from those of a later date. You will find all the standard powders all right, I think, as long as the cartridges containing them are kept away from grease, oil, etc.

As to the powder you used in the .30-30 failing on the stump; you see that the finer graduations of powder require extreme pressure to burn and develop all their strength. Pull the bullet from a .30-30 and you can safely burn the powder on a card in your bare hand; it's the pressure developed by the crimp on the muzzle of the shell, and the violent swedging of the bullet into the rifling that makes the terrific pressure of the rifle loading. The larger grains of blasting powder, in the modern makes do not require such a pressure to explode properly.

As to the mushrooming properties of the .32 automatic Colt, I find that the pistol does not give the power necessary to open up a soft-point bullet in good shape on soft material. Do you ever have a chance to shoot a soft-nosed bullet into a large dog, or anything that will approximate the flesh of a man? If so, let me know what the effect is. A friend of mine put two soft-points from a .30 Luger through a setter that had gone daffy, and had to finish him with a Winchester. The bullets did not tear him at all.

As for the Colt .44 you mention; I think it is without doubt a remodeled cap-and-ball. These were very popular in the Southwest in the times immediately after the Civil War, and I presume your old friend has seen many an Indian fight, and perhaps was the relic of one where the whites lost out.

Colt made his pistols first in Paterson, N. J., then moved to New York, and remained there fo some time. Then Hartford, Conn., the present home of the Colt, was selected. I am under the impression that the factory was in New York in the '40s and early '50s, but am not very clear on this point. I think the handle is of ivory, instead of bone.

When the Gold Bug Stings

DON'T plunge headlong into the north country just because you've decided to venture a-prospecting. Oh, yes, many a fool has done that very thing—jumped in before he knew what he was tackling. Some have come out, others have not. A little knowledge of the land they were entering would doubtless have saved their lives; perhaps it would have made fortunes for many of them:

Question:—"Four friends and myself are planning to go to British Columbia or Alberta. Please answer the following questions concerning the two Provinces:!

Which Province is better-suited for hunting, trapping and prospecting for gold?

Where can we obtain maps and detailed information about the two Provinces?

Must one obtain a lease on the land he intends to trap and prospect?"—Jos. Nariss, Gary, Ind.

Answer, by Mr. Carson:—British Columbia is the best province for prospecting, especially for a man who has been stung with a gold bug as you appear to have been. Write the Deputy Minister of Lands, Victoria, B. C., for a map of the province and also for a map of the Cariboo district, for that is where I am going to advise you boys to strike for.

I never saw a book on prospecting and I never expect to see one that would be worth the cost of the cover on it. This must be learned from Old Lady Nature with Experience acting as Assistant Instructor. You must get in on the ground and study at close range, generally with a No. 3 shovel in your hands at the time.

I would suggest that you go in about the first of April, as you planned, and take up a homestead. No matter if it is not the very best of farming land, it gives you a residence and this is necessary before you can get a trapper's license. Then get a job at Barkerville or Quesnel in the mines and pick up all you can both in wages and experience. Put in the

Summer that way and throw out a trap line in the Winter.

Your chances with fur are a heap better than with gold. The following Spring, if you are still inclined, you can take a shot at prospecting, but I am placing a bet that your money will go into a small bunch of stock for your homestead. Try it and see which of us is right.

The Races of Hawaii

IT WOULD be hard to find as many races under any flag as there are living under the Stars and Stripes in Honolulu. Do they intermarry? Is there strong race antagonism? You will be surprised to learn the real condition of things there, especially that of our Japanese:

Question:—"Will you kindly give me some information about social conditions in Hawaiian Islands? It appears that whites intermarry freely with Chinese, Japanese, etc., and that there is little or no racial friction. This seems very strange, when you consider the bitter feeling against Orientals that is found in California; so I am curious to learn the facts, and wish to ask you a few questions.

1. If a white man should marry a Hawaiian, Japanese or Chinese woman would he suffer social or other annoyance, or be ignored or boycotted by other whites?

2. Would there be a difference in treatment of a man marrying, say, a Japanese woman from that of one marrying a native or Chinese woman?

I consider this, particularly at this time, a matter of great importance, and one having direct bearing upon the future relations of America and Japan; so hope you will give me your best assistance."—D. S. WILLIAMS, Los Angeles, Calif.

Answer, by Mr. Halton:—It is not right to say that the whites intermarry freely with Chinese, Japanese, etc. As a matter of fact, quite the reverse is the case. Native Hawaiians have married Chinese, and they make a very good combination, but the whites rarely marry any of the Asiatics. The Japanese invariably send to Japan for their wives, marrying them by proxy and the custom has originated the phrase "picture brides" for the reason that photographs of prospective husbands in Hawaii is sent to Japan and the brides' pictures sent to the husband in Hawaii. The civil and religious ceremony takes place in Hawaii on the arrival of the steamer from Japan.

There is practically no racial feeling in Hawaii because the Oriental does not displace white labor as he sometimes does in California. The Japanese (who largely predominate) work in the sugar fields and do work that it would be extremely difficult to get white men to do. It is true that their ambition is to get into some business in the towns and consequently you will find them working in the stores and the automobile repair shops; and there are, perhaps, a hundred garages in Honolulu alone operated entirely by Japanese. The fishing industry of the Islands is in the hands of Japanese and some feeling is stirred up that the hundreds of sampans (small fishing boats) all built in Honolulu, an American port, fly the Japanese flag on gala occasions and never the American flag.

I believe that no significance should be paid to this, however, as it is thoughtlessness for the most part, as the American-Japanese clubs urge on all their compatriots the fact that in any emergency they must remember that they are Americans first. The population of the Islands on June 30th was 256,180 in the following nationalities:

American, British, German, Russian	30,400
Chinese	22,250
Filipino	20,400
Hawaiian	22,850
Part Hawaiian	16,100
Japanese	106,800
Portuguese	24,250
Porto Rican	5,200
Spanish	2,270
Korean	5,000
Others	660

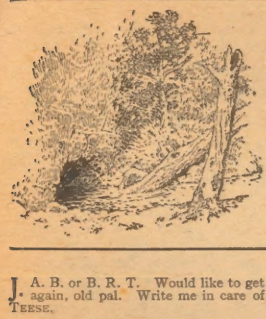
Think that you may safely assume that the mixture of Chinese, whites and other races is fairly represented by the number shown under the heading of "Part Hawaiians" so that the intermarriage is not so prevalent as you believe.

To answer your questions:

1. The native Hawaiians and those of part native blood are prominent in the social and business life and marriages are frequent between whites and those of wholly or part native blood, which does not subject them to different treatment socially or in any other way to that accorded other whites.

2. Whites rarely intermarry with Japanese or Chinese, for one reason due to the scarcity of women of those nationalities in the Islands. I do not know of a single case of a white man marrying these races.

We have heard a great deal of the American-Japanese situation and it is, perhaps, difficult to forecast to what nation the people of Japanese descent would turn to in case of trouble between the United States and Japan. The Japanese in Hawaii fought loyally for the U. S. A. in the late war and the action of the legislature at its last session insisting that Japanese teachers in the Japanese private schools pass an examination as to their Americanism before being allowed to teach will have the effect of making good American citizens of the young Hawaiian-born Japanese. It is significant that the largest Japanese daily newspaper is printed half in English for the reason that the growing Japs do not read Japanese.



LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

J. A. B. or B. R. T. Would like to get in touch with you again, old pal. Write me in care of *Adventure.*—H. S. TEESE.

SMITH, CHARLES E. Last heard of in Spokane, Wash. Any information will be appreciated.—Address GEO. MALPARS, St. Andrews, N. B., Canada.

INNES, RICHARD AND JAMES. Of St. John's, N. F. Are somewhere in Canada. Any information will be appreciated.—Address JACK H. CARROLL, Box 23, Parkerton, Wyoming.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

AYTON, TOM. Age about thirty years. Was overseas with the Australian forces. Any one knowing his address please write.—W. F. SKEPPER, 1612 Summit Ave., Seattle, Wash.

MATTOS or MURRAY, FRANK J. Painter. When last heard from was with Headquarters Co., 145th Field Artillery, A. E. F., France, in October, 1918. Any information will be appreciated.—Address C. M. SANDIORV, 680 Golden Gate Ave., San Francisco, Cal.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

STREETZEL, FRED. Former member of Amazon River Expedition. Communicate at once with James Carson. Equipping outfit for Peruvian Expedition to start by December. Wire for transportation if needed. Write old address.—JAMES CARSON.

PHILLIPS, WARREN J. Last heard of in Corbin, Ky., about one year ago. Height about five feet three inches, weight about 165 pounds, age about forty, red hair. Any information will be appreciated by his son. —Address JAMES PHILLIPS, 656 E. Jefferson Ave., Detroit, Mich.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

WALLACE, ROLAND MARTIN. Five feet, nine inches tall, blue eyes, dark-brown hair, weight 150 pounds. Telegraph operator. Last heard from at El Paso, Texas, in 1915, working for E. P. & S. W. R. R. Any information will be appreciated.—Address H. L. WALLACE, Stratford, Texas.

BROOKS, JAMES HENRY. Of Spalding, Lincolnshire, England. Sailed from England April 26, 1906, on steamship *Virginia*, Allan Line. Is now about thirty-six years of age. Last heard of on a trapping trip in Canada. Any information will be appreciated.—Address F. B. GOLDESBERRY, care of *Adventure.*

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

BAKER, M. LENA. Formerly lived in Wapakoneta, Ohio. Came to Silver City, New Mexico, in 1914 or 1915. Stayed a couple of years and went back to Ohio. Last heard of taking course in nursing at Mt. Sinai Hospital, 1918. Any information will be appreciated.—Address IDA L. BEAL, Cloverdale, New Mexico.

POLLARD, CHARLES. Last heard from at Pasadena, Cal. Lived in Miami, Ariz., for some time. Would like to hear from him or his family.—Address JIM POLLARD, Enfield, N. S. Wales, Australia.

ROBINSON, DAN. Brother. Don't be discouraged. Progress in prospecting is slow. Expect to be through by November. Three years was not sufficient here. —Address CARL, Fresno, Cal.

KEASER, JACOB. Uncle. Last heard from in Montana. Believed to be a ranchman there. Any information will be appreciated.—Address LENA KEASER GREENE, care of Lieut. F. V. Greene, U. S. S. *Mercy*, Navy Yard, Charleston, S. C.

HALL, LESLIE A. Last heard of in Philadelphia in 1916. Was in U. S. Navy till the beginning of 1915. He was then discharged, holding rate of Q. M. 3rd Cl. Any information will be appreciated.—Address A. FULLERTON, Box G., Cobourg, Ont., Canada.

LOUDEN, HAL. "Red." Last heard of in San Francisco, Cal. Was in 147th Co., U. S. M. C. Write to your old bunkie of Paoli days. Would appreciate news from any of the old gang.—Address SCOTT H. ARMSTRONG, U. S. M. C., Radio Sta., Camaguey, Cuba.

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SMITH, WILLIAM. Brother. Formerly of 619 Tower St., Fall River, Mass. Was last heard of in 1900. Has brown eyes and hair, about five feet eight inches tall and forty years of age. Any information will be appreciated. —Address ELLA DOHERTY, Hotel Del Coronada Coronada Beach, Cal.

SMITH, PAUL J. Last seen in Cleveland, Sept. 5th. He is five feet eleven inches tall, has light hair, blue eyes, weighs 180 pounds. Lived for past eight years in Buffalo, New York. Any information will be appreciated.—Address MRS. PAUL J. SMITH, New Amsterdam Hotel, Euclid and 22nd, Cleveland, Ohio.

HART, HARRY LEE. Born at Cotton Plant, Ark., February 17, 1889. Has three brothers and one sister. Last heard of in Springfield, Mo., July, 1908. Blond hair, blue eyes, weight about 140 or 145 pounds, five feet nine inches tall. Any information will be appreciated by his father.—Address J. B. HART, Brinkley, Ark.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

WILLIAMS, "MONTANA" or WALTER, or BAKER, WALKER G. Is an actor, either on the stage or in moving pictures. Dark bushy hair, dark complexion, large dimple in chin, age thirty. Last seen five years ago. Any information will be appreciated by his mother.—Address MRS. ALBERT PEARSON, Box 165, West Barrington, R. I.

HARTWIG, GEORGE H. Addresses since Spring, 1917, known to be Pacific Garage, Eureka, Cal; 222 Eighth Ave., San Francisco; Waldorf Hotel, San Diego; El Centro, Cal., Calexico, Cal. Last heard of driving auto stage in southern California. Write your old pal.—Address AL. WHELAN, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Dorm., Cambridge, Mass.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

KEMP, JOHN CRAWLEY. Husband. Mysteriously disappeared from his home in New Castle, Pa., on February 9th, 1919. Has never been heard of since. Was employee of local post-office. No reason known for his disappearance. Height five feet eleven inches, weight 180 pounds, dark hair, brown eyes, age forty-six. English descent. Has a brother, Frank Kemp, located somewhere in New York City. Any information will be greatly appreciated.—Address MRS. JENNIE L. KEMP, 1612 Highland Ave., New Castle, Pa.

THE following have been inquired for in full in either the Mid-December or First January issues of Adventure. They can get the name of the inquirer from this magazine:

ATKINS, W. F. L.; Baughman, Guy; Beavers, Frank E.; Belcher, Ralph; Brown, R. H.; Brown, W. R.; Campbell, James W.; Cansler, Clyde; Clochesy, William; Collins, Michael James; Conde, James Bache; Connor, Maggie; Doyle; Driscoll, John Joseph; Elliott, Richard Lillicoe; Holmes, Norman L.; Howe, Roger Willoughby; Knowles, Edward; Meadows, Julian H.; Morningstar, Richard; Murphy, Floyd; O'Hara, Earl William; Parke, Hicok; Pollock, Granville A.; Pratt, George B.; Rohrbeck, Frank W.; Rounsley, Charley D.; Rowe, Glen S.; Russell, John L.; Saxon, Walter Percy; Schafhausen, Leo J.; Skene, James Percy; Tyler, Mrs.; Wangenstein, Fred Jr.; Ward, Arthur C.; Wende, Bernhardt N.; Whitters, Joseph H.; Williams, James; Wilson, William H. C.; Woon, Basil D.

MANUSCRIPTS UNCLAIMED

HASTLAR GAL BREATH; Ruth Gilfillan; Jack P. Robinson; Ray Ozmer; Miss Jimmie Banks; O. B. Franklin; Bryon Chrisholm; Wm. S. Hilles; A. B. Paradis; G. E. Hungerford; James P. Goggins; E. E. S. Atkins; E. Murphy; A Gaylord; E. J. Moran; F. S. Emerson.

UNCLAIMED mail is held by Adventure for the following persons, who may obtain it by sending us present address and proof of identity:

ALLISON, CORP. JAMES T.; Beaton, G. M.; Benson, Edwin Worth; Bryson, Clarence F.; Mr. Brownell; Carpenter, Capt. Robert S.; Carr, Fred; Casey, H. E.; Coles, Bobby; Cook, William N.; Cosby, Arthur F.; Engleby, B.; Garson, Ed.; Hale, Robert E.; Harris, Walter J.; Hart, Jack; Hines, Joseph; Kelly Charles Lester; Koltzau, John; Kuckaby, William Francis Kuhn, Edward; Kather, Harry; Lafler, Mrs. Harry; Lancaster, C. E.; Larisey, Jack; Lee, Dr. C.; Lee Capt. Harry; Lee, Dr. William R.; Leighton, Capt. "Lonely Jock;" Lovett, Harold S.; McAdams, W. B.; MacDonald, Tony; MacNamee, Alva I.; Madsen, Sgt. E. E.; Hunt, Daniel O'Connell; Parrott, D. C.; Reid, Raymond D.; Rich, Rob; Rodgers, Stewart; Randle, Merrill G.; Scott, James F.; Shepard, H. O.; Swan, George F.; Taylor, Jim; Tripp, Edward; Van Tyler, Chester; Von Gelucke, Byron; Wetherell, Corp. D. E.; Williams, Raymond J.; Williams, W. P.; Wood, Basil D.; S 177284; 439; L. T. 348; J. C. H.; W. S.-X. V.

PLEASE send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at address given us do not reach you.—Address E. F. BRACE, care *Adventure*.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

FIRST FEBRUARY, 1920, ISSUE

Two of the stories that come to you next month are listed on page two of this issue; here are the others. Each will bring you a fascinating adventure from a different corner of the earth.

A TEACHER OF ETIQUETTE — *By E. S. Pladwell*

"Bull" Judson is a dangerous man. He has robbed trains, cleaned out banks and rustled cattle, yet he feels that Gila City is lacking in manners and decides it is his duty to give the first lesson.

CLAY JOHN — *By Arthur O. Friel*

Deep in the South American jungle, a dozen dingy, black vultures watch his struggles. They see he is weak, that little life is left in his frail body, and they know they have not long to wait.

SALVAGE — *By Henry Leverage*

When *Micky McMasters* hears that there is a ship-load of Turkish Tobacco and other valuables drifting along the coast, he determines that he will either find that derelict or take up chicken farming on Long Island.

THE TABLET OF SHUN — *By Robert J. Pearsall*

Through the crowded streets of Sian-fu, *Partridge*, a young American, follows his Chinese guide to what he knows to be a death-trap, yet, did he turn back, he would sacrifice the life of a friend.

MAN TO MAN Conclusion — *By Jackson Gregory*

In which *Steve Packard* discovers an unusual way of stealing cattle.

THAT EVERLASTING WOMAN — *By Hapsburg Liebe*

There is one thing this twelve-year-old mountaineer can not abide; that is women. For they never cuss, nor play poker, nor drink liquor.

A TRIUMPHANT JOURNEY — *By Charles N. Webb*

When *Paddy O'Toole* states his decision to leave the woods for good, the lumbermen laugh. For years *Paddy* has been deciding to do this, but, heretofore, has never succeeded in getting beyond Dan Kelly's saloon.

WHERE NOTHING EVER HAPPENED — *By W. A. Macdonald*

Pirate ships are commonly supposed to be things of the past, yet here we find one anchored off a fashionable shore resort.

THE PROPHECY OF THE BLIND — *By H. A. Lamb*

In seventeenth-century India prophesies were respected and believed. Yet even *Abdul Dost*, man of the Mogul, who is deeply religious, must shake his head skeptically at the blind man's astounding prediction.